

Title: Do(O)M Day

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Summary: Department of Mysteries Day. Day of Overwhelming Misery. Doom Day. The Day Time itself stopped and started to revolve around one Harry James Potter and the day he lost everything he cared about.

AN: IE, Yet Another Groundhogs Day/Harry Potter crossover story. Based around the last day of OWLs, when he and the 'Ministry six' went to the Department of Mysteries to 'save' Sirius Black and ended with Black being killed and the Wizarding World waking up to the threat of Voldemort, almost too late. First day, IE "Day Zero" is identical to canon. Everything else, as AU as I can swing it while still being based off canon.

Story:

Harry's feet hit solid ground again; his knees buckled a little and the portkey that had been shoved into his hands moments before fell with a resounding clunk to the floor. He looked around and saw that he had arrived in Dumbledore's office.

The last time he'd been in here had been shortly before the Easter holidays, the night that Dumbledore had been sacked by Umbridge and Fudge. The mess that had been made by the Headmaster's sudden departure and subsequent scuffle had obviously been repaired, as though it had never happened.

Quite a lot had happened since then in fact. If only it were as simple to make it all like it never happened, things would be so much better, he thought. He paced around the office, stopping to look out the window for several moments, noting that it was nearly dawn. He glanced over at one of the fancy grandfather clocks around the room and noticed it was only a few minutes till seven in the morning. Had it only been a day ago that he woke up with nothing more than OWLs and Umbridge to worry about?

It all seemed so... trivial now. Like the last day had been nothing but a nightmare and he was going to wake up in his bed with Ron snoring any moment now.

The empty fireplace burst into emerald-green flame, making Harry leap away from the door, staring at the man spinning inside the grate. As Professor Albus Dumbledore's tall form unfolded itself from the fire, the paintings on the surrounding walls all jerked awake. Many of them gave cries of welcome to the absent Headmaster.

Harry ignored him, struggling to keep his temper and the overwhelming guilt contained.

"Harry..." Dumbledore tried to speak to the distraught teenager, but said youth was not listening.

"Well, Harry," said Dumbledore, when Harry finally acknowledged him speaking, "you will be pleased to hear that none of your fellow students are going to suffer lasting damage from the night's events."

Harry said nothing. His temper became easier to control as his guilt reached a breaking point, just without going over it. He'd gotten his friends hurt, by doing what he usually did, leaping into the lions den without even bothering to look, or even think about looking. He hated himself at that moment.

"Madam Pomfrey is patching everybody up now," said Dumbledore. "Nymphadora Tonks may need to spend a little time in St. Mungo's, but it seems that she will make a full recovery."

Silence was the only answer the old wizard received.

"I know how you are feeling Harry," Dumbledore told him.

Harry wanted to snap out at him, get angry, tell him that he was wrong, that there was not way he could know how he was feeling. Even with Legilimency and Harry's Occlumency abilities worth less than crap, he sincerely doubted that Dumbledore could truly comprehend how he was feeling at that moment. Instead, he just turned to glance at the grandfather clock again.

"Harry?" Dumbledore's voice sounded concerned.

"It's 6:57," Harry whispered, his voice thick with emotion and tension. "One day ago, I was just now waking up, after barely three hours sleep, after watching Hagrid being chased from his home for the past fifty years, after watching Professor McGonagall being stunned by almost half a dozen wands all at once, after two solid weeks of Hermione stressing over tests for the hundredth time, and above all else, after spending two and a half months under that... witch's thumb because you didn't stay and let her take over!"

"Yesterday," Harry continued, voice still quiet and thick with emotion, tears were pooling in his eyes. "Yesterday, I thought I'd been having some bad days. A few bad weeks even. Maybe even a bad couple of months. I didn't know what having a bad day was."

He walked over to the clock and stared up at the face, "The difference a day makes, huh? I just failed one of my OWLs, History of Magic, ironically. I assaulted a Ministry Official and interim, but still official, Headmistress of Hogwarts, handing her over to a very angry pack of centaurs, terrorized Hagrid's brother Grawp, stole the school Thestrals, left school without permission, and to top it all off, broke into the Ministry of Magic just because of a magic vision I got from my aching scar."

He turned and looked Dumbledore dead in the eye, practically begging him to read his mind then and there with Legilimency. "The consequences of these actions are that five of my closest and quite possibly only friends were in a fire-fight and near-tortured to death by dark wizards that had a minimum of thirty years experience on the oldest of us. I single-handedly compromised everything you've been trying to do with the Order of the Phoenix for the past year in the span of a few hours. And, I got the very man that I was going to save, killed. By his own cousin none-the-less. I destroyed the only weapon that we had against Voldemort, which he wanted. And let's not forget, I was possessed by Voldemort and tried to kill you right before trying to get you to kill me."

He was breathing heavily and the tears were streaming down his face, wiping away the dirt of the night's battles in streaks of clear flesh. "So please, Professor, tell me again how you KNOW HOW I FEEL!"

He turned back to the clock and faced it rather than Dumbledore's pitying gaze.

He watched as the clock ticked away the last few seconds of the hour. He snorted and then sniffed. "I wish this day had never happened. Or better yet, that I could do it over again. Over and over and over again until I got it perfect. The perfect day where everybody is happy, healthy, alive, and Voldemort is either dead or rotting in Azkaban along with everyone like him that could ever possibly threaten people."

"Harry, I'm sorry..." apologized Dumbledore.

The clock clicked over to seven o'clock and began to chime.

Chapter One: Nightmare

Harry rolled over in bed and glanced at the small clock next to his bed that was pinging the hour. He heard Ron groan something unintelligible, and then a sound like a water balloon and a horrid smell filled the room before being vanished by the refreshing charms that had been in place since midway through Harry's first year. Dean and Seamus both gagged and fled for the washroom. Neville coughed and then put his pillow over his head before trying to go back to sleep. The door to the washroom slammed shut, eliciting a snort and another fart from Ron.

Harry blinked and then slowly sat up and looked carefully around.

He was in his bed. In his dorm room. The clock said it was now seven o'clock in the morning. The morning light filtering through the window seemed to support this.

Harry's emotions were still in a bit of turmoil, but seeing that both Ron and Neville were, seemingly, sleeping comfortably in their beds, he began to wonder if the whole thing was just a nightmare. Getting up and moving over to the nearest reflective surface, he inspected himself, and other than a few rings under his eyes from lack of sleep, he looked pretty good. Which is to say he didn't look as though he'd just fought a battle against Death Eaters and Voldemort himself in the Department of Mysteries at the heart of the Ministry of Magic.

He sat there until Seamus and Dean came back in, and he finally decided to see exactly what was going on. He washed and dressed quickly and made his way downstairs to breakfast. Seeing Hermione, Ginny and even Luna at breakfast did much to ease Harry's worries and convince him all the more that the whole thing had just been a nightmare. Probably brought on by the little sleep he'd had coupled with stress over his final OWLs.

Speaking of which, he remembered, and was reminded by Hermione, that he needed to fit in a few more hours studying in the morning before the test. Convinced and immensely relieved that the whole experience was nothing but a nightmare, and that he'd finally stopped dreaming about that damned corridor... of sorts, he almost gladly spent the rest of the morning by the common room window reading through a stack of notes over three and a half feet high.

He actually managed to get all the way through most of them by the time lunch rolled around without falling asleep once. When two o'clock rolled around, the Fifth Years all marched into the Great Hall and sat to take their History of Magic OWL.

Harry was sat behind Parvati again... wait, again?

He shook his head and refocused on his test. He actually managed to get to the second sheet of questions this time before he found himself walking down the dark corridor to the Department of Mysteries and then to the endless shelves of prophecies.

Once again he was in the cathedral-sized room full of shelves and glass spheres . . . His heart was beating very fast now . . . He was going to get there this time . . . When he reached number ninety-seven he turned left and hurried along the aisle between two rows . . . But there was a shape on the floor at the very end, a black shape moving upon the floor like a wounded animal . . . Harry's stomach contracted with fear . . . with excitement . . . A voice issued from his own mouth, a high, cold voice empty of any human kindness, "Take it for me. . . . Lift it down, now. . . . I cannot touch it . . . but you can. . . ."

The black shape upon the floor shifted a little. Harry saw a long-fingered white hand clutching a wand rise on the end of his own arm, and he heard the high, cold voice say, "Crucio!"

The man on the floor let out a scream of pain, attempted to stand but fell back, writhing. Harry was laughing. He raised his wand, the curse lifted, and the figure groaned and became motionless.

"Lord Voldemort is waiting. . . ."

Very slowly, his arms trembling, the man on the ground raised his shoulders a few inches and lifted his head. His face was bloodstained and gaunt, twisted in pain yet rigid with defiance, "You'll have to kill me!" whispered Sirius.

"Undoubtedly I shall in the end," said the cold voice. "But you will fetch it for me first, Black . . . You think you have felt pain thus far? Think again . . . We have hours ahead of us and nobody to hear you scream . . ."

But somebody screamed as Voldemort lowered his wand again; somebody yelled and fell sideways off a hot desk onto the cold stone floor. Harry hit the ground and awoke, still yelling, his scar on fire, as the Great Hall erupted all around him.

And then suddenly, just like that, though with some lingering pains in his scar, Harry was freed from the vision, and he screamed and cursed. Not literally of course.

"SHIT! BLOODY HELL! BASTARD! STUPID BLOODY BASTARD!" Harry shouted as he charged out of the Great Hall, ignoring all the stares and the exclamations from the examiners.

Not this time. Not again. He wouldn't...

But it was so real.

Damnit!

Well... this time at least he remembered that Snape was still at the castle...

Harry was still kind of hung up about the 'this time' portion of that thought, but he was still too geared up from the vision he'd just had and memories of what had happened when/if he actually tried to go to the Ministry of Magic to 'save' Sirius to care much about the how this was all happening.

Still, he'd rather not deal with Snape at all, so his first stop was actually the Hospital Wing to speak with Madam Pomfrey. It wasn't until he was already there and saw the matron spooning a bright blue potion into Montague's mouth that he remembered that Professor McGonagall had actually been transferred to St. Mungo's long before he got there.

"Oh!" Madam Pomfrey gave a shrill shriek, splashing some of the potion into Montague's face. "Potter, what do you think you're doing here?"

"Uh," Harry's brain stalled for a moment, before he thought of something else to ask her, "When was Professor McGonagall transferred this morning?"

Madam Pomfrey blinked at him, somewhat surprised. "Shortly after breakfast ended," she answered. "She was transferred to St. Mungo's this morning. Four Stunning Spells straight to the chest at her age? It's a wonder they didn't kill her."

"How did you know she was transferred?"

But Harry was already moving, racing to the dungeons even as the bell rang, signaling the end of the exams. He really didn't want to do this, but hell if he was going to panic and put his friends in danger again. Or let Sirius be killed because of him.

He reached the Potions classroom just as it was letting out a bunch of Second Year Ravensclaws and Hufflepuffs. Snape was behind his desk, scowling at the pile of paperwork that had appeared there as the young students left their homework behind for him to grade. If Harry didn't know any better, and whose to say he did, he'd say that Snape would sooner blast it all to confetti rather than grade a single parchment.

"Potter?" Snape scowled at him the moment he walked through the door. "What are you doing here? Don't you have OWLs to attend? Not even your father was so stupid to cut out on OWLs, you..."

"Voldemort has captured Sirius and is holding him in the Department of Mysteries in the Prophecy Room, just behind row ninety-seven, where the prophecy about me and Voldemort is kept. Will you please let go of what my father and Sirius did to you long enough to save his life?"

Snape blinked and just stared at the distraught young wizard, and then without a word, pulled out his wand, slammed the door shut and reached for a hidden catch beneath his desk. He then pulled out a mirror very similar to the one that Harry had gotten from Sirius for Christmas. Harry almost blasted himself with his own wand when he finally remembered that mirror and that he actually had a way to contact Sirius himself!

After a minute, as well as several insults that Harry was too preoccupied to pay attention to, Snape handed the mirror over, sneering, and waited. In the mirror, Sirius's scruffy face shown.

"Sirius!" Harry exclaimed, happy beyond words at seeing a man he'd thought dead or tortured.

"Harry!" the image on the mirror exclaimed so loudly that the mirror almost jumped out of his hands. "What's wrong? What happened? Are you all right?"

"Well, other than Voldemort sending me a vision of him torturing you in the Department of Mysteries between rows 97 and 98 where the prophecy is being kept... Yeah, I'm great!" Harry laughed, relief and happiness pouring into him when he saw that Sirius was still alive. He really hoped that the nightmare from last night didn't happen again.

Snape and Sirius both looked at him, wariness and gleeful surprise in their respective faces.

"What? I said I'm great. Nothing too surprising about that, is there?" he said to Sirius, ignoring Snape for the time being.

"No, nothing too surprising about that. Although it is your last day of OWLs..." Sirius chuckled, "There is also the fact that you found out something you've been wanting to know since we picked you up last summer."

"What? The Prophecy about me and Voldemort?" Harry shrugged. "I'm just relieved to see you alive, Sirius. By the way, if I do get tricked by Voldemort before the end of the day... don't come rescue me. I... I really don't want you to die Sirius. You're all the family I've got left..."

"Oh enough dribble already," Snape scowled and tore the mirror from Harry's hands. "Black, be sure to inform the rest of the Order about this. I'll keep an eye on Potter here, make sure he doesn't get into trouble."

"Oh, that reminds me, I need to go introduce Umbridge to the centaurs," Harry got up and started making his way to the exit.

"... That he doesn't get into any more trouble," Snape growled at Harry's back. "You be sure to tell Dumbledore what He is up to."

"Already on it Snivellous," Sirius chuckled as he prematurely broke the connection.

If it hadn't been his personal mirror in his hands, Snape might well have smashed it into a million pieces. As it were, he turned all his newfound ire squarely onto Harry's shoulders.

The rest of the day was very different from Harry's perspective. He wasn't constantly worrying about Sirius being tortured by Voldemort because he knew that Sirius was safe and sound at Headquarters. Likewise he knew that Kreacher was an outright liar and if it weren't for the fact that Sirius kept him around for some reason, he would be all for having the (pardon the pun) creature put out of everyone's misery.

Still, because he now knew Sirius was okay, he had no reason to go and steal a look at Umbridge's fireplace, and no reason to get him and the others caught by the Inquisitorial Squad and thus Hermione didn't lead them out to where Grawp was and they didn't run into the herd of centaurs. Shame that, because he really wanted Umbridge to get a bit of justice at the hands of creatures she repeatedly persecuted.

As it was, his afternoon was spent hanging with Ron and Hermione under the same tree his father and friends hung out after their own History of Magic OWL. Like with every exam so far, Hermione was fretting over the ones she'd gotten wrong, but Harry was just happily enjoying the moment and the freedom that Sirius was safe.

Until Snape stalked up the path, and unlike his younger self in a memory, he wasn't holding sheaves of notes nor was he looking particularly pathetic and bullied. Instead, he had his wand out and he looked far more predatory and bullying.

"Potter, come with me," the Potions Professor snapped at him, barely pausing in his march across the courtyard. Harry looked back and forth between his friends and shrugged. Judging by the look that had been on the man's face, Harry didn't particularly feel like risking his ire any more than he already had, so he got up and quickly raced to catch up with him.

After quite a few twists and turns through the school corridors, they found themselves down in Snape's office, the pensieve out and filled,

which Harry only saw after the door had been sealed shut behind him.

"I thought you said that we were done with the Occlumency classes?" Harry asked him.

"Obviously, I mistook a lack of natural talent as pure ignorance, coupled with your violation of my privacy and our equally short tempers, I made a rather rash decision. The information you provided me this afternoon, however, forces me to revoke that decision," the man fluttered like a bat around the room, casting privacy charm after security spell, until he stood silent and still before Harry, looking much like a bat would when hanging upside down from the ceiling.

"Yeah, and?" Harry wanted to know what was going on. Nothing like this had happened in his dream...

"And the fact that you recognized the Dark Lord's ruse for what it was, rather than be lead to believe it as truth tells me that you've actually progressed some in your Occlumency. It's time to test how secure your mind really is and whether or not you'll be able to withstand the Dark Lord for any amount of time at all. Legilimens!"

Harry's eyes shot wide open, he hadn't been ready at all, and his wand was no where near his hand. The shock, more than anything is what finally gave him the hint that he'd been missing for all those months after Christmas where Snape had continuously violated his thoughts, saying only to clear his mind as far as advice went. At that moment, there were no thoughts in Harry's head at all, his emotions were too busy being shocked for him to really have any. As it was, the initial pressure he felt from Snape's spell slammed against his mind... and bounced off of... nothing.

Unfortunately that got Harry thinking, and thoughts were apparently vulnerable in his head right now, and Snape never stopped with just one attempt. Nevertheless, Harry had felt it. He'd felt what Occlumency should feel like, and he had a feeling that he could do it again, intentionally this time.

They spent the rest of the afternoon and well into the evening practicing, and Harry's headaches were as bad as they ever were, but he was feeling a bit of success. Aside from that first time, he'd

managed to deflect Snape three more times, and the last couple he'd even managed to kick him out even after getting in initially. Of course the dream-memory of kicking Voldemort out just by embracing his emotions as weapons may also have had a hand in it, but progress was progress and Harry while reluctant to do so, had to admit that he'd actually learned something from the greasy git.

Harry went to bed with the worst headache of his life and no supper, but also with the knowledge that Sirius was alive and well and Voldemort was not getting the Prophecy.

In the morning, Harry rolled over in bed and glanced at the small clock next to his bed that was pinging the hour. He heard Ron groan something unintelligible, and then a sound like a water balloon and a horrid smell filled the room before being vanished by the refreshing charms that had been in place since midway through Harry's first year. Dean and Seamus both gagged and fled for the washroom. Neville coughed and then put his pillow over his head before trying to go back to sleep. The door to the washroom slammed shut, eliciting a snort and another fart from Ron.

Harry blinked and then slowly sat up and looked carefully around.

He was in his bed. In his dorm room. The clock said it was now seven o'clock in the morning. The morning light filtering through the window proved it too.

Frowning, he rubbed his head, still feeling the lingering effects of his training with Snape the night before. There was something familiar about all of this too, but his head hurt too much for him to make any sense of it at the moment.

Shrugging to himself, he got up and got himself to the loo to get ready for the day. It wasn't until he was halfway through his shower that he realized today was supposed to be Friday, if not Saturday.

"Oi, Dean, what day is it today?" Harry asked when he saw his dorm mate.

"Thursday. Last day of OWLs, Harry! WOOHOO!" the tall black wizard cheered.

Except Harry didn't feel like cheering. Yesterday he'd gone through the entire day believing it to have been one solid nightmare, but three days in a row of it being the exact same day? Harry might not have been the most brilliant wizard of the age, but he certainly wasn't slow by any accounts. Something weird was going on here, he just needed to figure out exactly what.

It wasn't until after lunch that he was sitting for his History of Magic OWL again that he came to the conclusion that somehow time was repeating itself. But not exactly. If he did something different, then things changed, but for everyone else, things stayed exactly the same. Especially for Voldemort, he discovered halfway through the exam when the identical vision from the first two times slammed into his brain. He'd tried using what he'd learned of Occlumency since then, but it hardly made any difference at all.

Harry debated what to do as the examiner fluttered around his prone form and helped him back to his seat. He knew that if he obsessed over getting to the Ministry, he'd just get his friends in trouble and hurt along the way. Whereas if he went to Snape, the man would find out he'd repelled Voldemort's probes and believe he'd advanced in Occlumency enough for them to resume training, and Harry really didn't feel up to another torture session, so instead he did something he'd never done before. He went back into the Great Hall, and sat down to finish his History of Magic OWL.

Except that, somehow, and he could only guess how, Snape still came storming across the courtyard when he was sitting alone with Hermione and Ron and dragged him to his dungeon office.

"What is it? What's going on?" Harry demanded to know once they were behind the sealed door.

"I don't know how you did it Potter, but I intend to find out," Snape muttered dangerously, still sealing off his office from detection.

"Did what? What are you talking about?" Harry asked, but strongly suspecting what was going on. He put his wand into his hand, just in case and worked on clearing his mind as he'd done 'yesterday'.

"I know that the Dark Lord sent images to your mind earlier today, attempting to invade your pitiful thoughts and mold them to his purposes. And yet instead of reacting as he anticipated, you do

nothing, nothing at all. Which means that you successfully defended your thoughts and mind against his attack. It's time to test how secure your mind really is and whether you'll be able to withstand the Dark Lord for any further amount of time. Legilimens!"

Harry had been ready for it this time, and his anger was a perfect shield for him at the moment, keeping his thoughts mostly empty and focused on Snape alone. So that rather than bouncing off in any direction, Snape's legilimens probe was actually reflected right back to its source, over and over for every attempt he tried with a straightforward mental attack. And then Snape did something unexpected and came at him from a different angle, mentally speaking, and suddenly Harry was back on the defensive, trying to push Snape out of one memory after the next.

And so the rest of the afternoon was spent in Occlumency training until well into the evening. Harry went to bed with the worst headache he'd ever had, period, and a silent vow to not let Snape ambush him like that again.

The next morning, Harry wrote up a note, signed it Albus Dumbledore, and then slipped it under Snape's plate at the breakfast table a minute or two before 'Headmistress' Umbridge sat down herself. Snape himself wouldn't even be showing up, as he always at breakfast in his office. Or at least he did today, and for Harry today was the only day that mattered.

Halfway through his exam, the vision came, but this time, he'd managed to stay conscience enough to remain in his seat. Afterwards, no Snape came storming across the courtyard. In fact, later that afternoon the school was informed that he'd been arrested by Dolores Umbridge on charges of sedition. Apparently she believed and had 'proof' that Snape knew where Dumbledore was and she was not letting him go until the Ministry had Dumbledore in its grasp.

Harry, this time, was in well enough spirits that he gleefully joined the rest of Gryffindor tower for the party that lasted until well past midnight. As it was, he was awake when the news went out.

Voldemort had been spotted at the Ministry of Magic. He'd raided the Department of Mysteries and slaughtered all of the early-morning workers that had shown up to quiet the alarms. In fact it

was being said that Voldemort and his Death Eaters had taken over the entire Ministry of Magic building as their new headquarters. Giving them a seat of unimaginable power from which they could launch attack after attack on the rest of the world until they ruled everything.

The only good thing that came out of it, in Harry's and his friends' eyes was that nobody could argue that he was lying about Voldemort returning.

How could this have happened? Harry asked himself as he sat awake, watching as dawn shown down on a terrible new day. How did it happen?

Voldemort had counted on him showing up to retrieve the prophecy for him, so... when he didn't show up and when Snape didn't report in about how come it didn't work, he went in himself, and because he was the other person the prophecy was about, he could remove it without consequence. And without the DA or the Order being there to stop him, he had full reign to the entire Ministry building...

And whose to say it hadn't already happened twice, he'd just been sleeping off Snape's Occlumency lessons to notice or learn about it before time reset again?

When he woke up to Ron's farts and the pinging clock, he felt like jumping up and down with joy.

Somehow, and don't ask him how, time was set in a loop, giving him all the time he needed to figure out how to stop Voldemort. First things first though, he needed to study up. And not for his History OWL, but for everything else he would need to know to stop Voldemort.

He briefly debated calling the DA together one last time, but held off on that. Not until he figured out how to take out Umbridge. Instead he went straight to the Room of Requirement after breakfast and didn't come out again until it was time for his History OWL. In the room, he practiced spell after spell and read through the sixth and seventh year Defense texts. He discovered the concept of Silent Casting in the reading and worked rigorously in making his most useful spells work without him having to shout the words. He didn't quite manage to get it to work, although he came close with his

Disarming spell by whispering it with no sound, but he still had to mouth the words to get it to actually work.

After his OWL, which he actually managed to complete this time around, he went straight back to the Room, leaving Ron and Hermione to search all over for him, wondering where he'd gone to. Harry learned a few new curses and hexes and a few other defensive spells that would help him out once he learned them well enough. He still couldn't manage Silent Casting, but he was making progress.

He actually went to sleep in the Room of Requirement that night, but still woke up in his bed. Before he was even fully away, he snapped out his wand and shot an air-freshening charm over Ron, just in time too. Sitting up, he sighed and nodded.

Today was the day, he decided. He'd find a way to stop Voldemort. For good.

No matter what it took.

Chapter Two: Curse

First thing Harry did after waking up (and casting an air-freshening charm over Ron's bed) was go digging in his trunk for Sirius's Christmas present. He found it exactly where he'd left it upon returning to Hogwarts, wrapped up in some old socks at the bottom corner of his trunk. He remembered at the time that he'd put it there, thinking that he didn't want to risk Sirius endangering himself and so he'd never use it in order to protect him. The irony is, of course, that originally Sirius had been killed because he'd forgotten all about this thing.

Opening the gift and pulling out the hand held mirror, Harry was about to activate it when he suddenly paused and looked around the room. Seamus and Dean were only now rousing and starting to get up. Neville had actually been roused by Harry's scrambling in his trunk and was looking at him curiously, while Ron was rolling over in his sleep. Nodding to Neville, Harry hid the mirror in the folds of his robe and raced for the bathroom. He closed himself in one of the stalls and turned on the cold water, well aware that hot water would make it steam and possibly block the image on the mirror.

"Sirius," he whispered once he was sure of privacy.

The mirror went black for a moment before something happened and suddenly Sirius Black's face filled the mirror's frame. The shaggy haired man grinned widely and exclaimed loudly (which thankfully was covered by the sound of running water, "Harry! You finally opened the present! I was starting to wonder...")

"Sirius!" Harry shouted into the mirror, startling the man on the other end into silence. "There is something going on and I need you to not be yourself right now. I need you to be my godfather, my parent's most trusted friend, and Padfoot of the Marauders. Can you do that?"

Stunned by the invocation of his role as godfather, Sirius merely calmed his expression and spoke in a tone Harry had rarely ever heard from his godfather in the two years he'd known him thus far. "What is it you require of me, godson?"

"Long story short, and don't ask me how, I know what Voldemort is after, he's going to try and send me a vision later today to get me

motivated to go and get it for him, mostly by making me believe that you get captured by him and that he will be torturing you around three o'clock this afternoon, telling you to take the prophecy off of the shelf where it is held on row 97 of the Hall of Prophecies in the Department of Mysteries on the fifth floor of the Ministry of Magic." He took a deep breath, having used most of his last to say all that in one go, and continued, "Somehow, Snape knows that Voldemort is going to send me a vision and will be watching for me to react in some way. Oh, and I almost forgot, Umbridge attacked McGonagall and Hagrid last night and now Professor McGonagall is in Saint Mungo's!"

"Ur... yes, well, that much I did know already. Hagrid is here now," Sirius told him. "Dumbledore's aware of the situation, and I'll be sure to let him know about what is going to happen. Now, what do you need from me? Because you do have your own means of contacting the Order, don't you?"

"Umbridge is watching all the floos, intercepting all the mail, especially my mail, and I just told you that Snape is looking to see if I have a vision from Voldemort," Harry pointed out.

"Uhrh..." Sirius looked a bit cross-eyed for a moment before asking, "What about sneaking out to Hogsmeade and sending mail from the post office?"

"Today's the last day of OWLs!" Harry shouted again, exasperated. "And those are probably being searched too. Anything else you got?"

"Well... you wouldn't know how to do an adfero yet, would you? No. So that leaves... hnh. Well, yes, I suppose contacting me is your last resort, isn't it? Sorry about that pup. But, uh, other than venting at me, and of course making sure I've not been kidnapped and am scheduled to be tortured around three o'clock this afternoon, is there anything else I can do for you right now?"

"Uh, is Dumbledore there right now?" Harry asks sheepishly.

"Why? What are you thinking Harry?"

"Well, this is where Padfoot of the Marauders comes into play," Harry shared a mischievous grin with his prankster godfather, who returned it proudly.

"I thought you said that you wouldn't get the vision until later today...?" he started to ask, but a look in Harry's eyes warned him off.

"I told you not to ask how," he reminded him. "I need to speak with Dumbledore, now please."

"Of course. Should I get popcorn first?"

"That's up to you," he grinned again. "I promise not to yell at him again."

"Oh poo, spoil my fun, and I get to have so little of it these days," Sirius mock-pouted before disappearing for some minutes, during which Harry actually showered and washed up. By the time he was done, Dumbledore's face was in the mirror. Harry was glad he left it facing the wall while he'd showered.

"What seems to be the trouble Harry? You are aware the danger you face in communicating with me during these troubling times, are you not?" the wizened old man questioned him.

"Sir, I know for a fact that Voldemort and a number of Death Eaters are going to be inside the Ministry of Magic tonight some time. Any time after closing hours can be a guarantee, though I don't know exactly when. Mostly they'll be there to ambush me in a plan to have me sneak in and get the prophecy from the Department of Mysteries so they can steal it, but as a back-up plan, Voldemort himself will be there as well."

"How do you know all this, Harry?" Dumbledore asked after a lengthy pause in which he considered everything Harry had just told him with all due seriousness.

"Please don't ask me how right now sir," Harry practically begged him.

"Harry, for the Greater Good, I must know," Dumbledore begged in turn.

Harry sighed and rolled his eyes in thought, considering what he should tell the Headmaster. "I promise to tell you after tonight sir. Or even better, the day you come back to Hogwarts, I'll tell you everything you want to know and more. But for right now sir, I have to ask you to trust me. And have the Order and as many Aurors and even the Minister himself ready at the Ministry for when Voldemort shows up."

"You ask a great deal Harry," the old man sighed. "How certain are you of this information?"

Harry considered, and then stared right into the mirror and answered, "He'll be there sir. I guarantee it."

"Hm..." the Headmaster stared back into Harry's eyes and seemed to come to some sort of decision.

"Very well, I'll see what I can do with this information Harry. Thank you for this. And I look forward to our next conversation," the man then terminated the connection between the mirrors.

Breathing a huge sigh of relief, Harry took a few moments to allow himself to relax. After that moment, however, he resolved himself and got his study materials and joined Ron and Hermione in the Common Room for the rest of the morning, reviewing Hermione's notes to prepare for their History of Magic OWL later that afternoon.

Harry trusted Dumbledore would not go back on his word, and more than that he knew Sirius wouldn't let Dumbledore or the Order just sit on this information. They had to take action. Harry was sure they would take action. If a bunch of students sneaking in could get Voldemort to reveal himself and fight the Death Eaters to a draw with minor casualties and only one death, then the entire Order of the Phoenix could do the same, hopefully with enough prior warning that the single death and most of the casualties could be avoided. Still, if the Ministry got involved too soon, or if Voldemort had warning of what the Order was going to do, things could go pear-shaped in a real hurry.

So Harry kept his head down and in the books the whole day right up until it was time to go to the Great Hall for the OWL exam. He

even resolved himself to finally sitting through and finishing the whole test, at least as a personal goal.

He knew that by not 'reacting' to Voldemort's vision, Snape would become suspicious and pull him aside for more "remedial lessons" after the exam, but he had a way around that. At least he thought he might. He'd find out this afternoon he supposed.

At two, he went in for the History of Magic OWL. At three, almost on the dot, Harry felt a sharp and penetrating pain originating from his scar, but he'd already been focused and working at clearing his mind for the past hour, so the vision, which had been clear and vivid so far, was grainy with the sound breaking up in places, also he could tell that they were more thoughts and imaginings rather than a true vision of what Voldemort was seeing or even his memories.

The pain, while terrible, was as bad as what he'd been experiencing for five days in a row, and if nothing else, Snape's lessons had taught him how to soldier through the pain and focus on what mattered. Once the vision had passed, Harry massaged his aching scar and was pleased to note that only half an hour had passed and he'd actually managed to stay in his seat this time and other than grunts of pain had stayed quiet as well.

After a few more minutes rest, which didn't really do much for his headache, but let him at least get used to it, he returned to his test and read through the last few questions on it, all of them essay of course. He couldn't answer them clearly unfortunately, he was too much in pain to focus that well, but he read through them anyway, doing his best to try and think through them. In the last five minutes of the exam, he finally just put in simplified one sentence answers, too tired by that point to think of anything else.

Much later, he lay in the sun under the tree, a couple of bags of conjured ice over his head and around his neck. His headache finally went away and now he was just trying to get rid of the tension that was wracking his body. And then Ron and Hermione both poked him awake and out of his small nap.

"Huh?" he asked drowsily.

"Snape!" Ron hissed at him.

Harry's eyes snapped open even as his hand went into his pocket to activate the mirror, which he trusted either Sirius or Dumbledore still had on them. "Don't worry guys, I'm sure there's nothing to worry about," he told them. At their incredulous looks he added, "But just in case, come find me if I don't show up in time for dinner. Might want to bring the whole DA with you if it comes to that."

"Right," they both nodded, their expressions saying that they took his suggestion more serious than he thought they would. Still, he wasn't about to stop them if they did take him serious. Hm... speaking of which...

"You guys do know I'm being Sirius, right?" he said a bit louder than he strictly needed to, but nevertheless he felt the mirror connect in his pocket.

They frowned at him, but by that time Snape had gotten close enough to snap at them, "Potter!" he grabbed Harry and pulled him to his feet. "Come with me! Now!"

He had enough time to shoot one last glance at his friends, but Snape was dragging him too quickly and there wasn't much he could do besides. Well, besides what he was doing right now that is.

After a bit of tugging and pulling and dragging, they finally arrived in the Potions Professor's empty office, where he went through the identical methods of sealing the room off that he always had. Although, after seeing it for the third time in a row, Harry decided to pay closer attention, while simultaneously pulling out both wand and mirror. He found he recognized some of the spells the Professor was using, but a couple went right over his head and he had no clue as to what they would be for.

"What is it? What's going on?" Harry repeated what he'd said the other day in these same circumstances.

"I don't know how you did it Potter, but I intend to find out," Snape muttered dangerously, still sealing off his office from detection.

"Did what? What are you talking about?" Harry asked 'innocently'. He prepared himself and worked on clearing his mind in defense of what was to come.

"I know that the Dark Lord sent images to your mind earlier today, attempting to invade your pitiful thoughts and mold them to his purposes. And yet instead of reacting as he anticipated, you do nothing, nothing at all. Which means that you successfully defended your thoughts and mind against his attack. It's time to test how secure your mind really is and whether you'll be able to withstand the Dark Lord for any further amount of time. Legili—!"

"SEVERUS!" a voice screamed out from Harry's left hand, where he held his mirror, with Dumbledore's face looming inside of it. "What is it you are doing, my friend?"

Snape glared murder at Harry, but the boy just blinked his big green eyes up at him and said nothing as he held out his hand with the mirror in it.

"Headmaster, I—" the Potions Professor tried to excuse himself.

"Never mind that for now Severus," Dumbledore waved off the excuse to both wizards' surprise. "I'm glad Harry got in touch with you when he did, no doubt to inform you of the information he's received. Voldemort will attack the Ministry of Magic tonight. We need to be ready for him, and I find myself woefully in-equipped to meet his forces head on. I require you to join me at Headquarters at once. We must prepare."

"But Headmaster..." Snape started to protest.

Harry couldn't believe his luck! Not only did Dumbledore believe him and was backing his idea and the information he'd given him, but he was pulling Snape out early so Harry didn't have to go through his 'Occlumency' lessons. This was looking better and better by the moment.

"I understand the pressure Professor Umbridge is bringing to bear, but I assure you, this must take priority for the time being. Leave as soon as you can and meet at Headquarters. And Harry?"

Harry turned the mirror back around so he was facing Dumbledore now, "Yes Professor?"

"I think it would be best if you stayed in your Common Room for the rest of the day. And make sure you are seen by as many people as

you can to verify your whereabouts at all times. I trust we'll talk again in the morning, and hopefully with more time to discuss... sensitive matters."

"Of course Professor," Harry grinned up at Snape. "I just need Professor Snape to let me go from our Remedial Potions lesson here and I'll head straight there."

"At once Severus," came the order from the mirror.

Growling sub-audibly, Snape waved his wand at the door just once, and Harry was gone the moment after, not waiting for a dismissal. He also deactivated the mirror as there was one other place he needed to stop by before hiding away for the rest of the day; the Kitchens, to tell the House Elves that he needed his dinner delivered to the Gryffindor Common Room as the Headmaster told him to stay there all night. They readily agreed and other than catching up with Hermione and Ron along the way, he headed straight for the Gryffindor Common Room without delay.

He then spent the rest of the afternoon, evening, and night there in the Common Room, save for bathroom breaks or occasionally to get a book or something else from his room, but nevertheless, he was never away from the Common Room or places where he could be seen for longer than a single minute, if ever that long. For most of the afternoon he spent the time with Hermione, reviewing over the History OWL they'd just taken, and finding out where he could improve for the next time. After even Hermione got bored with that, which was about dinner time, he stayed in the Common Room, ate his elf-delivered meal in front of late-runners and early-returners, and then talked Ron into a mini chess tournament.

Because he hadn't gotten Snape fired that day, something he was planning on rectifying tomorrow, there was no wild party in Gryffindor that night, but Harry wasn't really in a partying mood. About an hour after dinner, Harry kept glancing at the clock every five or ten minutes on the mark, obviously tense about something. Because now was about the time that he and his friends had originally arrived in London and started making their way down into the Department of Mysteries.

While there was no logical reason to expect to receive word directly, let alone before tomorrow, Harry couldn't help feeling great anxiety

about what was happening at that moment beneath London in the Ministry of Magic itself.

Everyone else in the Common Room could feel the tension he was giving off, none of them able to do much of anything about it. Some tried going to bed early, only to come back down when that same anxiety-ridden tension kept them awake. Pretty soon the mini chess tournament turned into a Gryffindor House intramural nighttime event, alongside every other wizard game that could be played indoors safely.

Every Gryffindor, from the exhausted Seventh and Fifth Years to the young and needing-their-rest First and Second Years, they all stayed up until whole hours after midnight. Mostly because of the unexplainable tension and feeling of anxiety, and partly because their Head of House was currently in Saint Mungo's and nobody else in the castle had the authority (or cared enough) to come marching in and order them all to bed.

Finally, around three-thirty or four AM, people's exhaustion was overcoming the subconscious tension, forcing them to bed. Until it was just Harry, Hermione, Ginny, Neville and Ron left awake. Around five in the morning, Harry had pulled out his mirror and sat it on the desk table in front of them and just stared at it. Hermione, Ginny and Ron all knew what it was and what it was for, while Neville recognized what it was, he could only guess as to who they were waiting on to call.

It happened at ten till seven, just before it changed over from six fifty to six fifty-one in the morning.

"No! No! NO!" a girl's scream echoed out throughout the tower.

Harry was wide awake the moment after and racing towards the source of the scream, only to come up short when he saw Ginny and Ron standing before the Gryffindor fireplace, the flames a bright emerald green, the same green as the Floo. Stepping closer, he saw Hermione on Ron's other side, hugging him tightly and Neville turned away, his face bowed. He could not see the faces of his closest friends, nor the young girl that had caught his eye after the disaster of a date with Cho Chang. And then...

And then he saw whose head was currently in the Floo; Mrs. Weasley.

She was crying.

She'd been crying for a very long time it looked like.

"What..." he voice croaked, forcing him to clear his throat, drawing everyone's attention to him, "What happened?" he repeated.

"Oh Harry, dear..." Mrs. Weasley wailed, breaking down in tears once more.

"It's Dad," Ron finally managed to whisper, his voice taut with emotion. Harry turned and looked and was floored by what he witnessed. There were tears running down his face. Ron Weasley was crying.

"What? What is it? What happened?" he was getting desperate all of a sudden. What had happened?

"He... he's dead Harry," Ginny whispered between sobs.

"So-so is Tonks and-and-and Hagrid," Hermione told him through her own tears.

Harry became literally floored at this as he toppled over backwards and landed flat on his butt. Looking over his shoulder, now practically face-to-face with Mrs. Weasley in the Floo, he asked her, "What happened? Please Mrs. Weasley, you've got to tell me!"

He was begging at this point and he knew it, but it didn't matter, he had to know what had happened to make things so different. Could his actions really have caused all this?

"Oh Harry..." a few more sobs and then the Weasley Matriarch was finally ready to speak, "First off dear, none of this is your fault."

"What happened Mrs. Wealsey?" he repeated slowly.

"There was an attack on the Ministry," she finally told them. "Professor Dumbledore had the Order mobilized and in place, we were trying to help defend the Ministry you see. Once we were

there... it was an ambush you see, the Death Eaters were already there. We fought them, they fought us, it was absolute chaos for a while, and then somehow the fighting made its way into the Department of Mysteries where... well where we were guarding the weapon You-Know-Who was after. Unfortunately, it looked like he got his hands on it. We thought... I thought that because Snape was there, he would try and get it away from He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named... but..." she dissolved into tears again.

Harry got to his feet and demanded to know, "What did he do?"

"..." Mrs. Weasley got herself together once more and finally answered, "Dumbledore himself fought Him, it was... amazing. The Professor actually had him cowed at one point, but then Snape came up and actually helped that monster to his feet, and then disappeared away with him. Snape helped him to escape!"

Harry scowled, a growl caught in his throat.

"Arthur managed to square off with Malfoy, but Malfoy did something and they both disappeared. We only... we only found their bodies half an hour ago... Tonks and Sirius fought Bellatrix Lestrange and her demented husband and brother. The Lestrange brothers were subdued and are in custody now, but... Tonks and Sirius both died, and Bellatrix escaped with Snape and You-Know-Who. Tonks by the Killing Curse, and Sirius fell through the Veil in the Department of Mysteries..."

"And if that weren't bad enough!" she shouted, the Weasley temper rearing its ugly head, "Right when Professor Dumbledore was winning against Him! The Minister of Magic and a whole load of Aurors and Ministry Workers Floo'd in, saw He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named, screamed that He was back! And then they had the audacity to attack us! The Order! The ones that were defending them and the whole Ministry to boot! They killed Remus on sight, claiming that he was a dangerous Dark Creature! It's not even close to the full moon!"

Mrs. Weasley went on for some time, but Harry tuned her out. It had all gone wrong, he thought. Everything bad had still happened, and even more bad stuff had happened because of what he'd done! And Snape! He thought the man was bad before, he'd trusted

Dumbledore, who kept insisting that he trusted Snape! And look where that had gotten them!

That did it, Harry decided, turning to glare at the clock above the mantle in the Common Room. Snape got no more mercy. If Dumbledore wanted to protect him, that was fine, but until this stupid time loop was done, Dumbledore was no where near the castle. He knew how to get Snape fired, well, he wouldn't stop until he got Snape locked up in Azkaban, kicked out of the Order, hunted by his fellow Death Eaters, and ultimately killed on sight!

Harry watched the clock click away the seconds, going over again and again what he'd do to Snape the next time around. But he was too wired to sleep. Maybe in an hour or so...

The clock clicked over to seven o'clock.

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Harry rolled over in bed and glanced at the small clock next to his bed that was pinging the hour. He heard Ron groan something unintelligible, and then a sound like a water balloon and a horrid smell filled the room before being vanished by the refreshing charms that had been in place since midway through Harry's first year. Dean and Seamus both gagged and fled for the washroom. Neville coughed and then put his pillow over his head before trying to go back to sleep. The door to the washroom slammed shut, eliciting a snort and another fart from Ron.

Harry blinked and then slowly sat up and looked carefully around.

He was in his bed. In his dorm room. The clock said it was now seven o'clock in the morning. The morning light filtering through the window seemed to support this.

"What the...?" Harry blinked again took a moment to try and figure out what was going on. One moment he'd been in the Common Room, the next... here?

But how? He hadn't gone to sleep, hadn't gone to bed at all. So how did...?

Harry looked back at the clock. Seven in the morning. Seven in the morning of the previous day. It had just been changing over to seven in the morning of tomorrow, and suddenly he was back here, at the beginning of the time loop. A time loop that apparently went for exactly one day, down to the very second of a twenty-four hour period.

Well, that was certainly news to him. After all, he'd been asleep every time the loop reset before.

But it also made sense when he thought about it. He needed to do some more thinking.

He stood up from his bed slowly, and began to pace around the room. First things first, he recalled, get Snape fired. The bastard was going to betray the Order at the first opportunity, and quite frankly he deserved whatever Umbridge would deliver to him. Second thing, while the Order had been fully prepared to face the Death Eaters, that just seemed to get more of them killed when compared to before and they'd gone in to 'rescue' the DA. Did that really make that much of a difference, or was it a numbers game?

All things considered, from what he'd seen of the Order and the Inner Circle of the Death Eaters both, Harry figured that Voldemort actually had more cannon fodder and raw numbers to throw into a Ministry raid than the Order had to defend it. Even if Snape had remained loyal throughout, Harry doubted that Dumbledore would have pulled him from Hogwarts if he wasn't needed, and needed badly.

Which, in the end, meant that Harry had to somehow get the Order some backup. Unfortunately the only 'backup' that he could think of would be the entire Auror corp combined with the Order... It would certainly win them the numbers game.

But how could Harry even make that possible? He was just one kid, one with a less than stellar reputation at the moment, and who was supposed to be sitting for his History OWL in a few hours. Anything he could say or do to anyone would accomplish exactly nothing!

He sighed and pulled out the piece of parchment and started writing the note to get Snape fired. He needed to get down there before Umbridge did, or else she would catch him and then... and... then...

No... He couldn't! Could he?

Well, it was a time loop...

And if he told it just right, he would definitely get the Aurors in place to protect the Ministry alongside the Order. But she wouldn't believe him if he told her Voldemort was going to attack. In fact she'd arrest him first and then probably interrogate him or something. She'd been willing to use the Cruciatus on him at some point, if he kept telling her the truth that she saw as lies, she'd never authorize the Aurors to mobilize.

But... what would she accept as just reason to mobilize them?

Hm...

Harry kept thinking about it even as he made his way downstairs to the Great Hall to place the note from 'Dumbledore' to 'Snape' right before Umbridge entered the room. He'd already made his way past her, not really caring or noticing that he was still in his bed clothes and that he looked more ragged than usual, but she certainly did.

Concerned at the funny look she'd given him, Harry glanced back just as he was leaving the Great Hall, watching as the toad-like witch make herself comfortable in the Headmaster's chair. He froze suddenly as inspiration struck like a bludger to the head.

That's it! He thought. She wants Dumbledore more than anything or anybody else. I can just tell her, after she arrests Snape, that I know where Dumbledore will be and she'll mobilize all the Aurors to catch him. I'll figure out how to do it later, but the important thing is to get more help for the Order. Speaking of which, I'd better go and talk to Sirius and Dumbledore and tell them about Voldemort attacking the Ministry...

He hurried back to the dorm to convince Sirius and Dumbledore to 'ambush' Voldemort and the Death Eaters at the Ministry of Magic that night, and then starts refining his idea for Umbridge into an actual plan. By lunchtime, he's ready. Snape got taken away shortly

before lunchtime, and Harry, despite all the studying he'd done for it, really didn't want to sit for an OWL that he'll never get to finish anyway, so instead he came up with an admittedly brilliant plan for fooling Umbridge into doing what he wants.

He intercepted her on her way to the Great Hall for lunch, practically bowling her over in the process.

"MISTER POTTER!" she screamed in outrage, and then quickly composed herself, looking furtively back and forth around them, "Hem-hem! What is it you think you are doing Mister Potter?" she asked in that sickly-sweet voice of hers.

"Headmistress! You've got to help me!" he 'begged', doing some of the best acting he'd ever seen, let alone tried before. "It's Snape! It was Snape! I'm sure of it now!"

"What? What was Snape? What has that traitor got to do with anything? He's in custody now, as I'm sure you're well aware," she seemed to preen when saying that.

"Snape was drugging me!" he shouted in her face, throttling her a bit by the shoulders. "Don't you see? That's what it was! I'd just seen Cedric killed! It was horrible! I can't even... But that's when it started, don't you see?" He was flaring his nostrils, keeping his eyes as wide as possible and trying not to blink too much.

"See what? What are you talking about? Let go of me at once or I'll..." she started to fight him, but he 'fought' back.

"No, no, no, no you don't understand! But how could you, I only figured it out today, don't you see? It's so clear to me now, but that's probably because the potions finally wore off... Or maybe I grew a resistance to it? I don't know exactly, but you're the only one that can help me Headmistress!"

"Potions? What are you talking about boy?" she was fighting his grip a bit less, but still trying to get free. He gripped her harder and throttled her once more for good measure, and because he wanted to.

"Snape! Snape is the Potions Professor! Don't you see? Dumb-dumb-door, er, that's not right is it? Bumble-bore... that's not it either

is it? Well anyway, the Headmaster had Madam Pomphrey give me something that Snape had brewed up and then told me a bunch of stuff. The next thing I know, I'm telling everybody that You-Know-Who is back! But that's just it, don't you see Headmistress? I never saw or witnessed any of the things that I said I did. Dumber-lore just told me what to say and I kept repeating it!"

"What?" her eyes had gotten as big as his and she'd stopped fighting him entirely. He throttled her a few more times just because he could.

"I'm free! I'm finally free! If I hadn't been skipping meals to study for OWLs, I might still be under the effect of Snape's potions! When you arrested him, you stopped him from giving me more potions! You freed me Headmistress!" he then did the hardest thing he'd ever had to do. He actually hugged the ugly toad.

After quite a bit more acting, and then pulling the same act with the Minister of Magic, they exempted him from his OWL exam for that afternoon and whisked him off to the Ministry itself, where he was then dragged to a small featureless gray room that held only a table and a single chair and made to sit in the chair for the next ten hours.

Whenever he tried knocking on the door, the Auror guard would look in and through this he managed to get a bite to eat, some drinks and found out that he was being held for questioning. An hour before the Ministry was to close for the day, the Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement herself, Amelia Bones, came in and asked him a few straightforward questions. He gave the answers that matched up with his story, and then added that he knew for a fact that Dumbledore would be in the Ministry itself tonight, supposedly to help in guarding some secret treasure that he 'believed' You-Know-Who was after.

She stopped her questioning after he'd told her that and then he didn't hear anything else for another four hours. After four hours though, he could hear noises coming through the walls. The noises progressively got louder and louder until he could properly identify them as explosions and the sounds of wizards and witches fighting. The fighting, much as he could tell (since his Auror guards had disappeared he no longer had any way of getting out of the tiny little room) lasted for a good two and a half hours, and then everything

had gone very quiet, very quickly. He was left sitting there for another three hours before he finally heard something else.

It was somebody walking past his door. When he heard this, he started pounding on the door, not caring if it was someone from the Order, the Ministry, one of the Death Eaters, or Voldemort himself, he had to get out of that room, and someone walking past could hopefully help him in getting out.

It turned out to be Amelia Bones herself. She looked a bit worse for wear, like she'd just spent the last three hours fighting, but she was alive and that was a good sign in Harry's book. And then she started delivering the news. The Bad news and the Worse Than Bad news. There was no good news other than the fact that the Ministry finally believed him and Dumbledore about Voldemort's return. Not that it mattered, as that fell under the 'Bad' news anyway.

The Bad news was that Harry hadn't changed anything, in fact he'd made it worse still. The Ministry didn't believe Dumbledore or the Order when they showed up to help. Not even when the Death Eaters and Voldemort himself had shown up. The end result was a three way war, instead of being a combined ambush against the Death Eaters that Harry had been hoping for. Apparently he'd underestimated the paranoia and animosity that the Ministry held for Dumbledore and the Order of the Phoenix.

Arthur Weasley, Tonks, Hagrid, Sirius, and Remus had all still died in exactly the same ways. The rest of the Order was under arrest, Dumbledore himself was being shipped off to Azkaban and Snape alongside him. That was the Bad news that Madam Bones considered 'good'.

The Worse Than Bad news was that as bad as a bunch of Death Eaters and some school children did as far as damage to the Department of Mysteries and the whole Ministry of Magic went, it turns out that the entire military force of the Ministry of Magic plus the pre-war Order of the Phoenix, along with the same number of Death Eaters plus Voldemort himself does infinitely worse damage.

First of all, Voldemort had gotten away with the prophecy. Second of all, the Death Eaters had raided the Department of Mysteries and several other Departments and made off with enough magical items

and resources to make them a worse threat than ever before. Mostly though, just the raw damage to the building itself and everything else that hadn't been taken was going to cost the Ministry hundreds of thousands in repair damages. Just replacing everything would probably be cheaper in the long run. Finally, the worst of it was that Harry himself was being held directly responsible for the entire thing by the Minister and his Senior Undersecretary. Madam Bones was actually there to process him.

He just sat down in the chair and sighed. Then he leaned back and put his feet up on the table and put his arms behind his head. "Well, that didn't work," he said to himself as he watched the seconds tick away on Madam Bones' fog watch. Before she could open her mouth to ask anything, the time clicked over to seven o'clock, and when he blinked, he was opening his eyes from sleep in his four poster bedroom in Gryffindor tower at Hogwarts, one day before.

Sitting up in his bed, he reached for his wand, cast the air-freshener spell at Ron's bed and then cast a silencing spell around his own. He then screamed out loud for as long and as loud as he could. Then he did it three more times until his throat was sore and he no longer felt the urge to scream or go on a rampage anymore. And then, finally, he sat back down and started to try and think of another way to do this.

Chapter Three: Revelation

Harry laid there in his bed, trying to think up some way of winning this, where the Ministry finally found out about and acknowledged Voldemort's return, but nobody died or got hurt. Unfortunately those two concepts seemed to be mutually exclusive as he could see no way to do one without the other. After all, the only way that he knew the Ministry would acknowledge Voldemort was if the Minister or enough of the upper echelon of the Ministry saw him with their own eyes standing in the halls of the Ministry of Magic. But the only way to get that to happen was to go there and walk right into Voldemort's and his Death Eaters' trap in the Department of Mysteries.

If Harry, his friends, or the Order went to the Ministry of Magic, a lot of them would get hurt, and Sirius (along with many others more recently) would die. If they didn't go, Voldemort would never show up. If Harry ignored the trap, Snape would give him more unwanted Occlumency lessons. If he had the Order go in his place, even with the Ministry on alert, people would die and Voldemort would escape.

What made no sense to him was how more people died than when he and his friends, only four of which, counting himself, had taken their OWLs, the other two a year behind, snuck in on their own and had to be rescued by the Order. What difference could six school children make when the entire Auror Corp couldn't?

Well then, he decided, if that's what it would take, that's what he would do.

Getting up, he quickly got ready and called Sirius while he was in the shower. He didn't bother talking to Dumbledore at all, instead saying he trusted Sirius to convince the Headmaster. Meanwhile, he snuck down and planted the note to get Snape 'caught'. It was too late to plant it before she got there, but he had Hedwig deliver it to one of the school owls, who delivered it to an Official Ministry owl, who delivered it to one of the local Hogsmeade postal owls, who delivered it to Filch, who raced it to Umbridge, saying he'd confiscated it en route. Snape was arrested minutes later, just an hour before Lunch. Normally she didn't arrest him until a few minutes prior.

As for getting owls to deliver to owls, well, oddly enough the owls seem to be intelligent and aware of the concept of pre-postage, and

it was simple enough to specify which "recipient" got the note and in what order. He used an extra owl to further protect Hedwig from being attacked, since anybody wanting to know where the postal owl had gotten the note from would only be able to trace it back to the Official Ministry owl, who'd actually been on its way back from delivering correspondence to Umbridge when the school owl had caught it before leaving Hogwarts grounds and having it deliver the note. There were hundreds of school owls, and hundreds of students and/or faculty who could have sent it via school owl. All it took was learning the name of the Ministry owl, which wasn't hard since it was posted on the owl's left leg and Harry had seen it quite often, even before the resets.

Now all that remained was trying to remember what he'd done the first time around and doing it all over.

That afternoon, Voldemort's vision came right on schedule. He wasn't able to stop it completely, and while he'd managed to get most of the way through the exam in the first hour (it gets easier when you just keep repeating the same answers when you know what was right and what wasn't), his anxiety over what came after kept distracting him. He managed to 'push back' against the vision, but it kept coming through, like it was being 'pushed back' even harder on the other end of the connection.

Still, he remembered well enough the first few times he'd gotten this vision that he'd woken up on the floor and had been screaming for some time. It wasn't that hard to just fall over and scream while holding his scar, and that was enough for the test proctors to pull him out of the Great Hall and give him some 'time to gather himself'.

After that, instead of racing to the Hospital Wing or Snape's office, he actually went all the way to Gryffindor tower and his dorm room and collected everything he'd planned on needing, including but not limited to; his Invisibility Cloak, every last remaining 'care package' the Weasley Twins had left behind that he could get a hold of in the morning hours, and most importantly the communication mirror, still deactivated. On his way through the Gryffindor Common Room, he recruited every Gryffindor he could see and find and gave them the 'care package' and talked them into unleashing Weasley Twin Hell upon Hogwarts once more. That should keep Filch and Umbridge busy enough, he thought.

By the time he raced back downstairs, Ron and Hermione were just getting out and meeting him on the second floor landing.

"Harry!" said Hermione at once, looking very frightened. "What happened? Are you all right? Are you ill?"

"Where have you been?" Ron demanded.

"Come with me," Harry said quickly. "Come on, I've got to tell you something . . ." He led them along the first-floor corridor, peering through doorways, and at last found an empty classroom into which he dived, closing the door behind Ron and Hermione the moment they were inside and leaning against it, facing them.

"Voldemort's got Sirius."

"What?"

"How d'you — ?"

"Saw it. Just now. When I fell asleep in the exam."

"But — but where? How?" said Hermione, whose face was white.

"I dunno how," said Harry. "But I know exactly where. There's a room in the Department of Mysteries full of shelves covered in these little glass balls, and they're at the end of row ninety-seven . . . He's trying to use Sirius to get whatever it is he wants from in there. . . He's torturing him . . . Says he'll end by killing him . . ."

"Oh Harry!" cried Hermione empathetically.

He shrugged off her attempt to hug him, instead glancing out into the hallway to check for any watchers. He turned back to his friends and told them, "I'm going to go and save him."

"What? But—but Harry, you can't just—" Hermione started to protest.

"Follow me!" he said to them, after another look at the hallway. "We need to move quickly, there's not a lot of time. Come on!" he urged when they weren't moving.

Harry lead them out of the classroom and back up the stairs as he spoke, struggling to contain the anger in his voice, causing it to shake here and there, which he hoped his friends would view as the fear and panic he'd been feeling the first few times around. Now . . . now he just wanted to get going so he could face Voldemort directly once more, and end this.

"We need to get there!" he told them as they passed the fourth floor.

There was a moments silence, filled only by the sounds of the stairwell as it shifted beneath their feet. Then Ron said, "G-get there? Get where?"

"To the Department of Mysteries! So we can rescue Sirius!" Harry said hotly.

"But — Harry . . ." said Ron weakly.

"What? What?" said Harry.

He still could not understand why they were both gaping at him as though he was asking them something unreasonable.

"Harry," said Hermione in a rather frightened voice, "er . . . how . . . how did Voldemort get into the Ministry of Magic without anybody realizing he was there?"

"How do I know?" bellowed Harry. "The question is how we're going to get in there!"

"But . . . Harry, think about this," said Hermione, taking a step toward him, "it's three-thirty in the afternoon. . . . The Ministry of Magic must be full of workers. . . . How would Voldemort and Sirius have got in without being seen? Harry . . . they're probably the two most wanted wizards in the world. . . . You think they could get into a building full of Aurors undetected?"

"I dunno, Voldemort used an Invisibility Cloak or something!" Harry shouted. "Anyway, the Department of Mysteries has always been completely empty whenever I've been —"

"You've never been there, Harry," said Hermione quietly. "You've dreamed about the place, that's all."

Well, that wasn't entirely true, he thought privately to himself, it's just no one else remembers when he did go. "They're not normal dreams!" he finally shouted in her face, stopping for a bit and taking a step closer to her in frustration. He remembered wanting to shake her, but this time all he wanted to do was run off on his own. He still might have if not for what he'd already seen happened when the Death Eaters showed up. He wasn't good enough on his own. Not yet at least.

"How d'you explain Ron's dad then, what was all that about, how come I knew what had happened to him?"

"He's got a point," said Ron quietly, looking at Hermione.

"But this is just — just so unlikely!" said Hermione desperately.

"Harry, how on earth could Voldemort have got hold of Sirius when he's been in Grimmauld Place all the time?"

"Sirius might've cracked and just wanted some fresh air," said Ron, sounding worried. "He's been desperate to get out of that house for ages—"

"But why," Hermione persisted, "why on earth would Voldemort want to use Sirius to get the weapon, or whatever the thing is?"

"Because of me all right!" Harry yelled at her. "Sirius is just someone Voldemort doesn't care about, except as a means of hurting me. Of drawing me out!"

They were silent after his outburst, and walked the rest of the way to the seventh floor, where the Defense Against the Dark Arts classroom and office was.

"You know what, I've just thought of something," said Ron in a hushed voice. "Sirius's brother was a Death Eater, wasn't he? Maybe he told Sirius the secret of how to get the weapon!"

"Yeah — and that's why Dumbledore's been so keen to keep Sirius locked up all the time!" said Harry, remembering what he'd said originally.

"Look, I'm sorry," cried Hermione, "but neither of you are making sense, and we've got no proof for any of this, no proof Voldemort and Sirius are even there —"

"Hermione, Harry's seen them!" said Ron, rounding on her.

"Okay," she said, looking frightened yet determined, "I've just got to say this. . . ."

"What?"

"You . . . This isn't a criticism, Harry! But you do . . . sort of . . . I mean — don't you think you've got a bit of a — a — saving-people-thing?" she said.

He glared at her. "And what's that supposed to mean, a 'saving-people-thing'?"

"Well . . . you . . ." She looked more apprehensive than ever. "I mean . . . last year, for instance . . . in the lake . . . during the Tournament . . . you shouldn't have . . . I mean, you didn't need to save that little Delacour girl. . . . You got a bit . . . carried away . . ."

A wave of hot, prickly anger swept Harry's body at the reminder. His jaw and fists clenched and he stopped walking, keeping his back to both his friends. Hermione took the opportunity to walk around in front of him, only to step back in fear once she did.

". . . I mean, it was really great of you and everything," said Hermione quickly, looking positively petrified at the look on Harry's face. "Everyone thought it was a wonderful thing to do —"

This was harder than he remembered, Harry realized. He wasn't going to have this argument again. Not when he needed his friends to trust him, to follow him. He was extremely emotional now and it had been more than a week ago now, he didn't remember how the argument had gone past this point, at which his panic had taken full hold of him and he'd seen nothing but red and the goal of getting to Sirius as soon as possible. He sat down on a nearby bench and just worked on clearing his mind, surrounding his mind in a shell of all the emotions he was feeling. Hermione and Ron kept glancing nervously back and forth between him and each other. Hermione

had honestly expected a more . . . well, a more violent reaction than this from her friend.

"Hermione," he finally spoke, his voice devoid of all trace of emotion and feeling. They both shivered at the sound. "They've taken McGonagall to Saint Mungo's, Professor Dumbledore left the castle, my mail is being watched, Hedwig nearly died in that attack! There's no way left to contact the Order, no way to verify that Sirius is safe, no way to check to see where Voldemort is."

"Shh! Don't say that name!" Ron squeaked.

Harry shot a glare at his best friend and nearly decked him. The look was enough it seemed, as Ron physically jumped back and tripping over his own feet he fell down on his backside while scrambling back.

"Are you going to help me save Sirius . . . or not?" he asked them both after a heavy silence. He looked both of them in the eye, asking them with his heart as much with his words.

Hermione bit her lip. Ron huffed and crossed his arms before looking to Hermione. Hermione looked back at Ron and then sighed, closing her eyes briefly before opening them on Harry's expectant expression.

"Of course we'll help you," Hermione answered, exasperated. "What is your plan?"

"Find Neville, Ginny, Luna, and anyone else you can think of from the DA you might think could help," he spoke animatedly, standing up and starting to walk towards the Defense classroom and office. "Have Ginny and Neville create a distraction on the other side of the castle, doesn't matter where or what, just enough to keep Umbridge out of her office for the next fifteen minutes or so. Er... Ron," he figured out of the two, his male best friend would have the most luck with this latter task, "tell Luna to go and get as many Thestrals saddled for travel to London as she can. Hermione, after you find the others, go..." He stopped to think.

"Harry?" Hermione asked nervously, "Wh-what is it you're planning to do? C-couldn't you just try to find out if Sirius really is in danger? Can't you think of some way to get word from Headquarters?"

Harry's face winced involuntarily, but he quickly hid his expression from her. He knew Umbridge had placed Stealth Sensing Spells on her office. She'd caught the others when the alert of him sneaking into her office had gone off and literally caught him with his head in the fire. And to be perfectly honest, he never wanted the others following him into trouble as it was. And he knew exactly what Peeves was doing, and Hermione would be better believed than Ron would be, not that he expected her to be believed in the first place. Still, if it was just him and him alone getting caught, it would just be him taking the risk. Better than the alternative, he thought.

"Hermione, go to Umbridge and tell her – tell her that Peeves is smearing ink on all of the Astronomy telescopes with some kind of permanent ink or something like that. After that, join Ron in finding as many of the others that would be willing to go. Don't use the coins, just find them and ask them," Harry said.

"Yes, all right, but – what will you be doing? What about checking to see if Sirius is in real trouble or not?" Hermione asked.

"..." Harry was silent for several long moments before answering, "I'm going to sneak into Umbridge's office and use her Floo. I'll make a call to HQ. I've got my Invisibility Cloak, so I won't need a lookout. It's also why I need Umbridge distracted for as long as possible. If I can't get a hold of anyone, then we'll be ready at a moment's notice. If I can . . . well, then we'll know for sure and I will see what needs to be done from that point on. Now go. I'll give you until the clock strikes the quarter hour, so you don't have a lot of time. Go!"

They went.

This was different from before, Harry knew. Besides, it didn't matter. He was in a half-blind panic and angry at everything before. This time, he had a plan, he was calm, and while he still had plenty of anger, the panic had dissipated in the face of knowing what was to come. Panic and fear often can overwhelm people, mostly through fear of the unknown. Not knowing forces fear to evolve into panic and the mind can make choices that it normally never would if it were fully informed.

Being fully aware of what could happen, as far as worst-case scenario goes, tends to diffuse the evolution of raw fear into

overwhelming panic. Instead it evolves into a slightly more useful type of fear; fear of the known and the consequences of actions to be taken.

A person that has followed the letter of the law all their lives will race around in a panic and make many, many mistakes if they ever steal something and maybe in the process kill one or more persons. Having no experience with the consequences of these actions, they'll do things that they normally wouldn't if they'd been thinking rationally. Where on the other hand, an experienced thief makes plans and accepts the consequences of every action taken, knowing that if they get caught the worst that will happen is they'll go to prison, and they probably even know what that will be like. Knowing and having experienced the consequences of their actions previously, they make wiser and more rational decisions when experiencing the same fear.

Harry had lived through the coming battle once. He'd experienced Sirius and other people being killed by Voldemort and his Death Eaters for more than a week on a daily basis now. Right now, the fear and anger he was feeling was focusing him, making things crystal clear to him that had been such a jumbled mess only a 'week or so' ago. He decided to pull another little prank on Umbridge, only this one would end up with her going to see the Centaurs rather than him ending up in a holding cell.

In light of this, Harry put on his cloak the moment he was out of sight and then waited outside the door to the Defense classroom until the quarter bell chimed. Then he counted out an extra minute and a half, just to give his friends, Hermione in particular, more time before sneaking into the classroom and ghosting between the desks and up the stairs to the Defense Against the Dark Arts Professor's Office.

He opened and closed the door quietly, but not exactly stealthily. Then with a short flick of his wand beneath the cloak, all the 'kitten plates' and 'kitten pictures' were flipped so they were facing the walls or the floor. Then he reached a single hand outside of the protection of his cloak, and threw in some Floo powder into the fireplace, giving the address for the Headquarters of the Order of the Phoenix. Then he stepped back into a corner and waited.

While he waited, he decided to take care of the other end of matters to bring his plan, such as it was, together. It certainly wasn't a very

good plan, it was more of a mission statement; to protect the Ministry with just the DA and the Order and leave the Ministry out of it.

Harry pulled out his mirror and activated it.

"Sirius, are you ready?" asked Harry. He'd already spoken to Sirius and Dumbledore earlier this morning to convince them of Voldemort attacking the Ministry, but privately he'd shared with Sirius that he was planning on he and his friends making it there to help out.

"Hey pup! I've been ready for this for months!" said Sirius via the mirror. "You want to speak to Dumbledore now?"

"No," Harry shook his head, making a rash decision, "Just convince him on your own. I know you can do it. Besides, if he doesn't come, there's the chance that we'll all be tortured and killed by Voldemort if he doesn't come and rescue us. Be sure to tell him that in your argument."

"Hah!" came Sirius's barking laugh. "That's a good one, I'll be sure to... Hold on a minute!"

"We're heading out soon Sirius, see you in the Department of Mysteries! And you'd better be ready!" Harry cut off the link and pocketed the mirror. It immediately tried to activate, but he ignored it, blocking the connection.

Ten minutes later, long after she had caught him the first time around, he got bored and started searching her office. Not really caring or looking for anything in particular, mostly just out of curiosity. Some of what he found was interesting. Most of it was not. A lot of it just made him plain angry and more sure of his plan than ever before. There were two locked drawers, which opened with simple Unlocking Charms, but he was also sure they sent out all sorts of alarms, which was fine because the next step of his plan relied on Umbridge 'catching him in the act' so to speak.

Less than two minutes after unlocking both of the drawers, enough time for him to see what was there in general and then close it all back up and get to his hidden corner, Umbridge came storming in with Filch and the same group from the Inquisitorial Squad behind her. Harry was grateful to see that none of his friends were being

held captive this time around. Just goes to show the difference thinking things out do compared to running around blindly like a chicken with its head cut off.

Harry grimaced as he recalled that was all Hermione had been trying to talk him into doing when they'd argued. He'd have to make that up to her sometime.

"Find him! He's somewhere still in here! Search every corner!" Umbridge screeched at her minions, while immediately going to her desk and locking the drawers back tight.

Harry made sure he breathed very quietly and rather expertly dodged Goyle's groping searches when he came to the corner Harry was staying in. After a brief, yet thorough search of the room, Umbridge's minions, IE the Inquisitorial Squad and Filch, reluctantly reported that they had found nothing to indicate anybody had even been in there. Umbridge's focus, however, was focused entirely on her fireplace. And the telltale ash and traces of Floo powder around the mantle.

"Get out!" she finally screamed at them, and they all scrambled out of the room as fast as they could.

She got up and paced in front of the fireplace, staring at it as she clacked her heels, the gears visibly turning in her toad-shaped head. Finally, she moved to sit back at her desk, and Harry felt now was the time.

"Stupify," Harry mouthed, as close as he could get to silent casting at the moment. The red jet of light shot out before Umbridge even knew that it hit her, and a heartbeat later she was face-down on her desk, looking to the rest of the world like she had simply fallen asleep in the middle of paperwork. Struck with a sudden brilliance, Harry "borrowed" the same black quill he'd become so familiar with in his detentions and with a simple animation charm, had the Headmistress write out two notes, each of which he posted on the outside of the Defense Classroom door and the Professor's Office door respectively.

Then, mostly to satisfy his curiosity, he reopened the locked drawers and took the time to look through them more deliberately. He was not disappointed.

Making note of many of the things he found there, he reinforced the stunning spell, and even added a jinx Hermione had shown him from a book that sort of 'locked' a stunning spell and required either an over-powered Enervate charm or the specific counter-jinx to finally wake the victim up. It was a spell designed for Aurors and Healers to use, to ensure that the targets didn't surprise them or wake up unexpectedly when it was unsafe to do so.

Now came the hard part. He'd only practiced this that one day, and Human Transfiguration was supposed to be a NEWT level skill, Professor McGonagall had given her classes the hints needed to put two and two together. At least she had with Hermione it seemed, as Hermione was the one to show him how it was done during the DA, and while neither had even attempted it, Harry had practiced everything in the sixth and seventh year texts the other day. Including Human Transfiguration. Well... it had been on a human sized training dummy the Room of Requirement had given him, one that also had living cells and 'meat' attached to it, and that had been successful—er mostly.

How much harder would it be to turn an unconscious toady witch into a sleeping toad?

It took him seven tries.

After he was done, he quickly made his way down and out of the castle and met up with his friends out behind Hagrid's hut, just inside, but not too far, of the Forbidden Forest. It turned out he was early though, so he had time for a little errand before hurrying back to the spot a little less than half an hour later.

"What happened?" Hermione immediately asked.

"Hey Harry, why do we need Luna's invisible horses?" Ron asked the moment after.

"I made sure Umbridge won't be able to stop us," he answered first, and then replied, "And Thestrals follow instructions well, have an amazing sense of direction, and can fly thousands of miles without need for rest. On top of that, most people can't see them, so when we're on their backs, no one will see us."

"You're making it sound like Luna's invisible horses here are real!" exclaimed Ron. Harry ignored him.

"Wait, but . . . Harry!" Hermione suddenly screeched, "What do you mean you made sure Umbridge won't be able to stop us?"

He glanced at his friend and briefly considered how to answer that question. He thought back to his errand and decided to give the answer he'd told the centaurs everyone would come to by the days end. After all, Hermione didn't really need to know that he'd transfigured the witch into a toad, carried the toad into the Forbidden Forest to the centaur hunting party, reversed the transfiguration, woke her up after taking her wand, and more or less 'gave' her to the centaur tribe as part apology, mostly retribution. Umbridge's "defense" didn't actually help her any and much like before they dragged her off kicking and screaming.

Harry had stayed behind long enough to explain to Bane and Magorian that he'd made it look like she'd sequestered herself in her office and by the time anyone thought to actually look for her, they would just think she'd left the castle, and it would most likely be several weeks if not a month or two by the time somebody actually realized she was missing, let alone start looking for her. Therefore they could do what they'd like with her and nobody would be able to trace it to the centaurs because by that point they would undoubtedly already gotten rid of all the evidence.

In the end, Harry told Hermione, "I hid under my invisibility cloak and stunned her when she came back to the office. I then put notes on the doors in her own hand writing that she was not to be disturbed no matter what. That will keep Filch and the Inquisitorial Squad from snitching on us to her, and give us time to go."

"But what about—?" she started to ask.

"Kreacher was the only one there," he growled, his anger at the horrid little elf making it easy for him to get back into the 'fight or flight' emotional mood. "He confirmed it, You-Know-Who has Sirius." He turned to face the rest of the DA that had come out, especially Luna and the thestrals she'd acquired for them to use.

Harry looked over the herd of skeletal winged equines. It looked like Luna had managed to convince half the herd away from the rest.

Thankfully they all looked fed and ready for action. Well, he couldn't tell that, but he hoped it was true nonetheless.

"Good job Luna, looks like we have plenty to go around. Thanks for doing this," said Harry with a smile. Then he looked around at the wizards and witches milling around. Besides his closest friends that had come with him initially, he saw Susan Bones and her friend Hannah Abbot from Hufflepuff, Pavarti and her sister Padma, along with Cho and Terry Boot from Ravenclaw. Colin and his brother Dennis and the entire Quidditch team from Gryffindor were present as well. Seventeen wands in all, counting his own.

"Harry?" said Cho, hesitantly stepping forward, "Is—is everything... OK?"

"No, not really," he said after some heavy hesitation on his part. He and his ex-girlfriend hadn't exactly parted on the best of terms, but apparently at the same time not on bad enough terms that she would never want to see or speak with him again. Before turning away, he looked back at her and added quietly, "Uh, thanks. For coming that is. It—means a lot, so—thanks."

He hurried off to the largest and closest Thestral and leaped up on its back. Most of those watching gasped in astonishment and fear. The only ones that did not were those that could already see the Thestrals apparently. He quickly glanced at Luna and confirmed that they'd all been fed, which thankfully they apparently had been.

"Now listen up!" he called out to his friends and allies. When he was sure he had their attention he continued. "You all know me by now, and I know all of you. What I'm asking of you today is not something that I would normally ask of anyone. To be perfectly honest, I'd rather go off by myself and make sure you all were perfectly safe while I went off to the Ministry of Magic, into the Department of Mysteries, and fought Vol..." he paused at the wincing he caught and restrained himself from any outbursts.

He continued, "... Fought You-Know-Who and all his Death Eaters by myself. Now here's the deal, I will gladly do just that. Any of you that would not or do not wish to do the same, stay here where you'll be safe. I'd really rather most of you stay behind anyway. Not because I think you can't do it, but because I know you can, and I'd rather you avenge me, than die with me."

"That's all I've got to say. Make your decision. We leave in two minutes," he told them and nudged his Thestral out from the crowd.

He hoped for them to cheer and immediately leap on on the unseen beasts and follow him to battle. He expected most of them, save those that had gone with him that first time, to explode in shouts and argument before turning and running off. Instead, what happened was they all just stood there and stared at each other and at him.

Ron was the first one to make a move, by walking up to Luna and asking her how to get on one of the invisible magical creatures. She gladly and simply showed him where the nearest one was and helped him to get on its back and showed him where to hold onto. After that, everyone save Neville and strangely the Patil twins were asking Luna for help. No one left or went back to the castle.

"This is mad," said Ron faintly, moving his hand gingerly along the reptilian equine's flank, "Mad . . . if I could just see it—!"

"You'd better hope it stays invisible," Harry repeated his dark warning from the first time. "We all ready then?" he called to the rest.

"Okay . . ." He looked down at the back of his thestral's glossy black head and swallowed. "Ministry of Magic, visitors' entrance, London," he said with certainty.

For a moment his thestral did nothing at all. Then, with a sweeping movement that nearly unseated him, the wings on either side extended, the horse crouched slowly and then rocketed upward so fast and so steeply that Harry had to clench his arms and legs tightly around the horse to avoid sliding backward over its bony rump. He closed his eyes and put his face down into the horse's silky mane as they burst through the topmost branches of the trees and soared out into a setting afternoon sun.

It was as magnificently terrifying as the first time and then some, because he had a lot more to lose this time around. They flew at breakneck speed, racing the sun as they flew South to London, and then when they finally got to the outskirts, they navigated the streets until finally they reached the rundown alley that held the Visitor's entrance for the Ministry of Magic.

It was night, roughly ten o'clock according to Big Ben. They'd made good time. They were earlier than Harry had thought they'd be.

Ron landed a short way away and toppled immediately off his thestral onto the pavement.

"Never again," he said, struggling to his feet. He made as though to stride away from his thestral, but, unable to see it, collided with its hindquarters and almost fell over again. "Never, ever again . . . that was the worst —"

Hermione and Ginny touched down on either side of him. Both slid off their mounts a little more gracefully than Ron, though with similar expressions of relief at being back on firm ground. Neville jumped down, shaking, but Luna dismounted smoothly. The Patil twins may as well have been Indian Princesses coming back from a long afternoon ride in the country on their horses. Cho, Hannah, Susan, and the Gryffindor Quidditch Team Chasers dismounted as quickly as they could and backed away from their invisible mounts. The Creevey brothers wound up face down on the ground, and Terry Boot had similar trouble, but only just managed to stay on his feet.

"Where do we go from here, then?" Luna asked Harry in a politely interested voice, as though this was all a rather interesting day-trip.

Harry took a deep breath, and rather than rush in as he had the first time, he tried to think of what to do now. He knew the route to the Hall of Prophecies now. From every other room in the Department of Mysteries even, so it didn't matter which of the rotating doors they chose. But what to do once they were there?

He was certain the Death Eaters were already here, but they would not reveal themselves until the moment after he'd removed the Prophecy from the shelf. His first instinct was to go and smash it directly, but that would make them expendable. The only thing that had given them a chance in the first place was that Malfoy didn't want to risk damaging the Prophecy by getting serious with a bunch of school children. Harry could use that to his advantage.

"Now—now comes the hard part," he told them. "Right over there," he pointed at the old phone booth, "is the Visitor's Entrance to the Ministry of Magic. I am going in there and down to the Department of Mysteries to rescue my godfather. This, however, is your last

chance, everyone, to turn back. Just... wander off into the city, make your way to King's Cross Station or Diagon Alley, tell them you ran off for a bit of fun. You'll get in trouble, but you'll be alive and healthy. If you follow me . . . I—I—I can't guarantee your safety."

"Harry," Hermione stepped forward, "We're all here because of you. Because of what you taught us. Because of what you've shown us. We're with you all the way."

"Sure," he muttered under his breath, rolling his eyes while they all cheered, "put the blame all on me."

Seeing as he had more than twice the group with him than he had the first time, they had to make two trips, he went with the last one that had all the girls in it. Once they were all in the Atrium of the Ministry of Magic, Harry made sure everyone knew the need for stealth here. Not that he had to do much to convince them. The creepy feeling in the air from the massive architecture with no one else around more than did the job on its own. Save for their footsteps and their own whispers, the only sound echoing throughout the Atrium was that of the fountain.

The more he thought about it, the more Harry was certain that the missing guard was a sign that the Death Eaters were already here. This was the Ministry of Magic for crying out loud! If any place in the entire Magical World, save maybe Azkaban, deserved round the clock security, and at least one guard at a designated checkpoint, it would be here!

They walked past without anybody making a sound and made their way to the golden gated lifts. Thankfully these lifts were plenty large enough for all 17 of them to fit without having to squeeze. Harry hit the button for the ninth level, and did his best to rid himself of his rising panic at all the noise they were making now. He knew what would happen, but it couldn't stop him from feeling the anxiety and fear of what could and should be happening all the same.

When the lift halted, the cool female voice said, "Department of Mysteries," and the grilles slid open again, they stepped out into the corridor where nothing was moving but the nearest torches, flickering in the rush of air from the lift. They all waited a moment, and then Harry squared his shoulders, calmed his breathing, and stepped out with his wand at the ready. Everyone followed him, and

if they didn't already they went and pulled their wands out and held them at their sides.

Harry lead them down the dark corridor that had plagued his dreams, nightmares and visions for longer than he cared to say, Luna right behind him, Cho and the rest all right behind her. Save for himself and Luna, they were all ambling along like school children on a field trip. A field trip to a dark and scary place that could get them all killed at any moment, but the simile was apt. He paused just before they got to the first door and looked back at all of them.

Speaking quietly and quickly, he said to them, rather than asking, "Okay, listen. We're going to be smart about this. I want Susan and Terry to stay outside and keep a lookout. If you get a signal on you coins that are all zeroes, I want you to run to the nearest floo or other means of contacting the people in charge, or at best the security that should have already stopped us like a dozen times over already."

"Oi!" exclaimed Boot and Bones both.

"I'm coming along too! I'm not missing out on this after coming all this way!" said Terry Boot.

"I didn't come just to be a lookout! I'm my aunt's daughter, and I'm just as good as anyone else! Besides, why couldn't you partner me with Hannah if anyone? How come she gets to go?" asked Susan Bones.

Harry silenced them with a look. He kept the silence for a minute longer, driving up the tension.

"Do you want me to be in charge, or not?" he finally put it down to the ultimatum.

Both Susan and Terry looked down at their feet, shame-faced.

"Susan," Harry said, "I know your aunt is the Head of the Aurors and DMLE. That's why I asked you to be the lookout, because out of everyone, Ron and Ginny included, you've probably been here the most. And you would know how to contact your aunt and the Aurors in an emergency. Terry, I asked you instead of Hannah to stay with Susan because first of all, I know Susan and Hannah are friends

and they'd probably spend some time talking or distracting each other from actually keeping a lookout. There is also the fact that next to Ginny, Hermione, Ron and myself, you're the quickest on the draw, and your Protego shield was as good as any I've seen. I'm counting on you to protect Susan while she gets help for us."

"I'm repeating myself here, but apparently I need to do that," explained Harry to the whole group. "We're not supposed to be here. Nobody knows we're here. I fully expect to see enemy combatants, Death Eaters, at some point. You-Know-Who is here. I expect my being here will draw him out. Hermione has informed me that with the exception of myself and some very, very, very lucky Aurors back in the day, You-Know-Who has killed every person that he's ever decided to kill. This is not an 'adventure' like whatever you hear in rumor. This is real. Start treating it that way."

They collectively gulped, but the bravest nodded their heads, while the smartest gripped their wands a bit tighter and looked around a lot more. Hannah just hugged Susan and then stood with those moving forward, while Bones and Boot started looking around for a place to hide.

"Come on," Harry motioned and the others all followed.

They came to the black door at the end of the corridor. It wasn't locked, as before, and it opened easy onto the pitch black and blue-flame-candle-lit rotating room. Remembering what had happened the first time around, and their simple solution, Harry went in last and on the inside of the door put a red flaming 'X' on the door. Then he walked in and closed it behind him.

"Harry, why did you—?" Hermione started to ask as the reason became evident when the candle flames and the red X started to spin around them until it was like lines of blue and red light. When it stopped, the door with the red X was to their right somewhere. "Harry, that was quite good thinking. Now we know which way is out, and we can mark other doors that we'll try.

"Hm..." Harry was curious though. Did the doors move, or did they move when the room spun? And if it was the latter, how is it they didn't feel motion sickness during or after the spinning? And Harry was sure he'd be able to tell if he was spinning about at all. So he quickly walked over to the door with the flaming red X and opened it

and looked outside. Yep, it was the corridor leading to the Ministry of Magic. Didn't answer his question, but at least now he could be sure. He shut the door and walked back inside.

"Just checking," he told everyone else once the room began to spin.

This time he went to the door directly across from the red X marker, and was disappointed to find the Brain room instead of the Time room or the Hall of Offices. He didn't really understand the Hall of Offices, but he remembered it clearly. Unfortunately, there was no easy way past the Brain room to the Time room, and that or the Hall of Offices was what he needed here, so he marked the door with a green and silver-ish letter B, and then shut the door, saying to everyone else, "Not the room we need," while waiting for the room to stop spinning. The next door was the Locked Door. He marked that with a green 'L' and chose the next one to his right. A comet shot past and he saw a couple planets in the background.

"OK, this might take a while," he sighed, marking the door with a green 'P'.

"Um, H-Harry? What is it you're doing exactly?" asked Hermione.

"Looking for the Hall of Prophecies," he replied, opening another door that he immediately slammed shut and just put a black scorch mark that showed up even on the black coloring of the door itself.

"What was that?" asked Ron.

"The Room of Death, holding the Veil," Harry remarked, opening up one of the last three unmarked doors, "We really don't want to go in there. Ah! Here we are. Hall of Offices. Just need to go down to the end and take the third door from the end on the left... Yeah," he nodded to himself and walked inside, leaving the door open behind him.

"Harry! How do you know this?" screeched Hermione, only to cover her mouth and look around worriedly for several moments.

"Told you I've been having dreams about this, haven't I?" he reminded her. It was the only thing he could think of. "I feel like I've been here before. And I know exactly where to go and how to get there."

"Harry..." she called, but he was already walking on. The rest followed.

They made it down the hall and to the specified door without anything more being said, and found themselves in the Hall of Prophecies moments later. Harry quickly identified which row they were on and raced through the rows until they got to the area between 96 and 97. Harry grabbed the prophecy and pocketed it before any of his friends made it around the corner, and then he only had enough time to knock the nameplate with his and Voldemort's names on it off the shelf.

"Harry? Where-where's Sirius?" Hermione asked as soon as she rounded the corner.

"Sirius," called Harry, holding up the mirror. The image connected in a moment and he explained the situation as quickly as possible. "We're here, and we're about to be ambushed by a bunch of Death Eaters. Is the Order here yet? Are we ready?"

"Not just yet," replied Sirius over the mirror. "You wouldn't believe what it took to convince Dumbledore to come as it is. He's kept insisting on talking to you. And to answer your first question, we're going past the Atrium right now."

"We'll try to get out of the Department of Mysteries, but if they find us, we'll have to bunker down. I'll call again if that happens. Harry out," he turned off the mirror and pocketed it. "Let's go people, we're about to be found... out..." he trailed off when he saw the gleaming white skull masks coming down the path.

"Never mind that, ATTACK! REDUCTO!" Harry shot one of the more destructive spells in his arsenal.

Ginny, Ron, Hermione and Neville all matched him in the spell used, while the others used stunners and bludgeoning spells. The shelves on either side of the group all exploded and started a domino effect, forcing the Death Eaters back. Harry was especially pleased to see that his own spell had gotten at least two of the group, and from their size looked to be Crabbe and Goyle Seniors. Ron also winged one of them, although it was more difficult to tell who.

"OK, now we run!" shouted Harry, leading the charge away from the Death Eaters and hopefully towards the nearest door, all amidst the cascading shelves of prophecies that were breaking and falling all around them in every direction.

Things were different from here on out, Harry thought to himself as he lead them back into the Hall of Offices, ironically much closer to the main entrance than he thought it would be. He made sure every one of his people were through before he closed and locked the door in the face of an enraged Malfoy, apparently his mask had come loose in the chaos. Just as the door started to unlock itself with an Alohomora, Harry took a deep breath, counted to three in his head and cast a point-blank Reducto at the door, making it explode outward from the point at which his wand had touched it. Looking through the open door way, he gulped and swallowed the bile that threatened to emerge at the site of six dead bodies in front of him. It looked like half of the rest of the squad sent in with Malfoy, counting Malfoy himself. But Harry knew they weren't out of the woods yet. There were more coming, coming with Voldemort himself.

He ran down the hall and quickly caught up with the others, who were running already, but he was well motivated. He pulled out the mirror and breathlessly re-established the connection.

"Sirius!" he gasped, "I really hope you're there!"

"Harry my boy," said Professor Dumbledore the moment his sparkling blue eyes materialized in the mirror, "Where are you? You appear to be out of breath. Are you all right?"

"Professor Dumbledore, I'm not sure—how much—Sirius told you," he gasped between lungfuls of breath, "but we were all—just attacked—by several Death Eaters in—the Department of Mysteries!" They finally made it to the door that would take them to the spinning room, so he stopped to get his breath back. When he was able to talk again, he said, "Voldemort is on his way here right now. I have the prophecy, and we do not have a lot of time. Is the Order in place?"

"My boy, what have you done?" came the saddened voice of the proclaimed most powerful wizard of the age since Merlin himself.

"Professor Dumbledore? What are you talking about? Is the Order in place?" Harry repeated.

"The only protections that object which you carried was that only you or Voldemort himself could remove it. So long as neither one of you removed it, it would remain their for the rest of time. Now that it has been removed... anyone can handle it."

"Sorry Professor, did I say I had the prophecy?" Harry remarked, hiding his anger behind a bit of shame at having to lie to one of the few people he truly respected. "I meant to tell you that I had smashed it to pieces the moment after I picked it up. So that way Voldemort will never hear the whole prophecy. But he's still coming here so, is the Order in place yet?"

Dumbledore blinked in surprise, and there was a brief struggle on the other end before Sirius's face replaced the image in the mirror. "Sorry about that pup, he kind of surprised me a bit there. We're here, we've got young Miss Bones and young Mister Boot here. Where are you?"

"Coming out now..." answered Harry as he opened the door to the spinning room, only to wilt and be filled with a fear that was becoming all too commonplace with him now. Voldemort, along with twenty masked and unmasked Death Eaters stood there, waiting for them in the middle of the room.

It was over very quickly after that.

At least to Harry it was quick.

The Death Eaters attacked, shooting lethal curses and Unforgivables.

Harry screamed for Sirius. Sirius screamed for Harry.

The door to the Ministry slammed open and the Order of the Phoenix charged in at the backs of the distracted Death Eaters.

Harry slammed the door shut. It blasted apart a heartbeat later.

Ginny and Hermione were dead.

Ron, tears and blood running down from a cut on his forehead, screamed and actually shot off an Avada Kedavra, killing one of the masked Death Eaters. He was shot and killed the same way by Voldemort himself a moment later.

The Patil twins recovered next, shooting out the dueling hexes that he'd taught them in the DA, sticking back-to-back as they dove into one of the offices. Neville and Cho dove after them. The rest of the Gryffindors were taking cover and shooting back with stunners and what curses they knew.

Harry stood up and cast the strongest Protego he'd ever cast, actually covering the entire doorway with it. Voldemort stopped casting with a scowl, knowing that if he cast a spell against Harry's it was spark another duel of wills like what had happened in the graveyard.

The Order actually took down half of the remaining Death Eaters before they even knew what hit them, and then it was a free-for-all.

Harry kept up the Protego and ordered Neville to take the bodies of the others to safety.

Hannah was crying.

Luna stood serenely in the corner, staring at Ginny's corpse.

The Creevey brothers were both bruised and bleeding, but alive. Harry ordered the rest of the Gryffindors to take Luna and Hannah to join Neville and the others.

The hallway behind him was clear.

He dropped the shield and wove into the melee with vengeance in mind. His repertoire consisted mostly of Reducto, Depulso, the cutting curse, the bludgeoning curse, and Protego. He rarely missed.

All the doors, save for one, were opened.

Harry protected the door leading to the Hall of Offices, never going more than a few feet from it. The room didn't spin so long as even one door was open.

Sirius fought his way through until he was by Harry's side.

No words were said, just a look, and then they were back-to-back fighting off the Death Eaters, most of which were focusing in on Harry, apparently told that he had the Prophecy.

It was too much. They had to run. Harry gestured to Sirius, the door behind them, the office the others were hiding in. They back stepped until they were in the Hall, and then Sirius, making it look like he'd overpowered or just cast when dodging and throwing off his aim, blasted the ceiling right over that door, a door that had already been shut and locked.

They ran, dodging spellfire all the way, stopping every ten yards to fire back, Harry holding the Protego shield, Sirius shooting until Harry's shield faltered.

They ran through so many rooms and down so many rows and hallways, Harry didn't know where they were until they finally arrived at a stadium-like room, with a whispering archway at the center of it. They were in the Death Room.

The fighting had reached here by now. Remus and Dumbledore battled Fenrir and Voldemort. Harry and Sirius were being chased by the Lestranges.

An explosion.

A distant roar of shouting.

A flash of red uniforms and more wands shooting spells.

The Aurors had arrived.

For once they attacked the Death Eaters and left anyone not wearing a mask alone for the moment. Amelia Bones came in with a full squad of Aurors and then some.

Rudolphus Lestrangle fell to Sirius's stunner. Harry petrified and silenced his brother.

Bellatrix cast a spell that knocked them back and down to the stage where the Veil stood, unaffected by all that was happening around it.

"Is that the best you can do!" Sirius taunted, dodging a red jet of spellfire.

Harry cast another Protego, but the spell broke after just one hit.

Bellatrix dodged Sirius's return spell, her eyes crazy as she mouthed the words for the Killing curse.

Harry's body moved, not as it had that first time, at the direction of Dumbledore's wand to pull him to safety, but through pure instinct. He felt an impact on his chest as he stood between Sirius and Bellatrix's spell.

As it hit, Harry witnessed Fenrir, in werewolf form, tear into Remus, who was still in human form. His guts spilled and stained the floor, running down the stairs in a river. On the other side of the room, Dumbledore's eyes went wide and his face fell. In his distraction, he did not block Voldemort's jet-black curse and less than a heartbeat later, his eyeballs exploded and black blood started running from every hole in his head. The last thing that Harry saw was Cho, the Patil twins, the Creevey brothers, the Gryffindor Chasers, and Neville all killed by numerous curses. Somehow they'd gotten out of the office and made it here, to the Room of Death. The brothers were blown apart. Neville died from the Killing curse. Cho, the Patil twins and the Chasers were hit by some kind of magical explosion, burning off their clothing and hair, and shredding their thin bodies with shrapnel until they were so much meat.

Harry's eyes snapped open, and he sat up with a gasp and tried not to hyperventilate or puke over his bedcovers. Ron moaned, rolled over, and the sound of a wet balloon popping filled the dorm room with a horrid stench. Seamus and Dean gagged and ran for the bathroom. Neville covered his face with his pillow.

What. The. Bloody. Hell?

DOM_____

_____DOM

Harry was tempted, sorely tempted, to take the day off as it were, but he knew that nobody would let him do that, especially not Voldemort or Snape. But he was not about to do any of that again.

He couldn't understand it. What was going on here?

The first time he'd lived through this day, admittedly he'd been going through most of it in a blind panic, he remembered clearly that he'd been able to bluff his way past the Death Eaters to drop their guard long enough for him and his friends to get away. The Order had not been informed that he'd even left Hogwarts until probably dinner time, if not later, at which point he and his friends had already been inside the Department of Mysteries. Well, to be honest, that was probably after curfew rather than at dinner time, but still...

The Ministry shows up at the end of the fighting and Voldemort and his remaining Death Eaters flee rather than continue fighting. Dumbledore actually leads the charge, showing up and saving the day as usual. The only casualties are Sirius and some property damage. Any and all other injuries, he'd been told by Dumbledore in his office, were recoverable and everyone would be fine before the end of the school term.

And then Harry starts changing stuff around.

He ignores Voldemort's vision, there is no attack, the status quo remains the same; the Death Eaters remain anonymous, but Snape ferrets him out and pretty much tortures him until curfew. He tells the Order about Voldemort's attack, still ignores the vision, but has Snape retrieved by the Order. The attack happens, and a lot more people than Sirius die. He tricks Umbridge into mobilizing the Auror Corp, tells the Order, and the Ministry takes out more people than Voldemort and all his Death Eaters did while said Death Eaters escape with more resources than they were even after originally. And, he spends the entire night in a holding cell.

And to top it all off, when he tries to go back to what he originally did, disabling Umbridge, getting his friends to help him escape after the OWL exam, and riding on thestrals straight to London and the Ministry of Magic, even with the foresight of alerting the Order of what he's doing, he gets everyone killed. Everyone!

Just him and the Order, Sirius and people he cares about die.

Just the Order and the Ministry, Sirius and people he cares about die.

Maybe—maybe it's time to try just the Ministry?

Seeing how time keeps looping, he can try it just to see what will happen. He'll need to have some way of knowing how it turns out though, and he's really not wanting to risk staying in a holding cell all day.

Harry got up and got ready for the day, which in this case meant showering and getting dressed and writing a note that will get Snape arrested before lunch... Wait a minute... the note!

Harry chuckled and modified the note he wrote from 'Dumbledore' to 'Snape', rather than just a 'love note' between colleagues, Harry made it a very, very important note, detailing plans to have Snape sneak out of the school and meet Dumbledore in the Ministry of Magic, and to bring the 'Secret Weapon' so they'll be primed to take over the Ministry, 'to protect them from You-Know-Who and his forces. For the Greater Good!'. He even signed it with the ex-Headmaster's full-name signature, copied straight from the Chocolate Frog card.

It was a rather ingenious spell Hermione had found and shown him when the DA was still going strong. All it did, basically, was you cast it on text written in a book or on another piece of parchment, or anything really, and the words magically copied themselves and arranged themselves exactly as they had been written on whatever you wanted them to. Of course the OWLs anti-cheating charms prevented this spell from working at all, but it made note-taking for the DA a whole lot easier.

The note, if it were ever closely examined, wouldn't stand up to even the simplest of scrutinies, but he was confident that it would fool Umbridge long enough for her to convince Fudge and whoever else she needed to at the Ministry to have the whole place on lockdown before Voldemort even showed up. And, as a bonus, with Snape arrested, he couldn't inform Voldemort that Harry hadn't taken the bait and would go ahead with the attack.

At least that was the plan. A plan he really hoped would work.

By lunchtime, Snape was being dragged off by the Aurors and three quarters of the school was celebrating. At three o'clock on the dot, Voldemort's vision slammed into Harry's occlumency shielding, which broke down immediately and Harry almost wished he'd fallen asleep as the pain was every bit as bad as Snape's worst attempt at penetrating his mind. He suffered through it and was grateful that he'd managed to finish the exam in less than one hour instead of the requisite two. That way he could just rest his head against the cool smooth wood of the desk.

He spent the afternoon with Hermione and Ron, nursing his Legilimency-spawned headache under the tree in the courtyard. After dinner he was feeling much better and happily joined in on the party Gryffindor was throwing in honor of Snape's departure. The party lasted all night until the wee hours of the morning, until it was actually morning.

Harry had a lot of butterbeer and a lot more fun this time around. It helped that he wasn't stressed out over what was going on at the Ministry. If the Aurors and the entire Ministry couldn't handle the Death Eater's attack with full warning and a day's advance notice, well then, he shrugged, what chance did they really have?

Even as the party started to wear down, people were staying up and regaling each other stories of Snape's cruelty and how they were so very glad that he'd been arrested. The one story that kept being repeated, and honestly never got old, was how Snape resisted and had to be beat down and then dragged out of the school.

Harry sat himself down in front of the fireplace, idly toying with his broken mirror. He still laughed when he remembered what it was that he'd done after placing the note for Umbridge to find. It had to have been right up there with the greatest of pranks his father and friends had ever managed to pull off against the greasy git. And what made it all the sweeter? The slimy bastard actually helped him pull it off!

He'd gotten the idea shortly after placing the note, having caught sight of Ginny and Hermione dragging Ron down the stairs. Apparently whenever Harry wasn't in bed when Ron woke up, he told Hermione and Ginny and they started to 'worry' for some reason or another. Anyway, Harry had been reminded that Mrs. Weasley,

that one time, had told them that Snape had actually gone and betrayed the Order, helping Voldemort to escape.

Well, he already had it so that Snape was going to get arrested that day. But it would be even better if he got thrown out of the Order at the same time, that way everyone would see him for the traitor that he was. How to do it though?

Harry had contemplated that for a little while until he remembered his mirror, and that Dumbledore never seemed to be too far from Sirius whenever Harry called his mirror. And what better way to take down Snape than to have him reveal his true colors before the man that always had his back.

Since his entire morning was free until lunch time anyway, it wasn't too much trouble for Harry to make his way down to the dungeons and get Snape's attention. Of course this was easier than it sounded, as all he had to do was walk up to the door of the man's private potions storeroom and trip the wards placed there. Then he walked quickly away, but not too quickly. Long enough for Snape to recognize him, but not for him to catch him too soon.

Harry actually made it to the 7th floor by the time Snape caught him, and had been talking with Sirius for two floors now. While he hadn't spoken to him at that point yet, Harry was fully aware the Dumbledore was listening in the background, mostly due to Sirius's answers to some of his questions, but also because the man really couldn't help glancing 'off-screen' to where Harry was sure Dumbledore was standing.

"POTTER!" Snape screamed, genuinely startling him.

Harry looked up, holding the mirror at his side, conveniently facing Snape so Sirius/Dumbledore could see who had shouted at him.

"What are you up to Potter? You're always up to something you stupid, arrogant, pathetic, dimwitted..."

"Is there something I can help you with Professor Snape?" Harry interrupted in the tone he knew would push Snape's buttons in all the wrong ways.

"You little...!" Harry was prepared for just about anything at that moment, but he had to admit that Snape was damn fast when he wanted to be. He actually shot a spell, probably nothing more serious than a stinging hex, at Harry and probably would have kept it up for a bit if Harry hadn't done what he did next.

Which was simply to block the spell with his mirror, which by that point held the face of Albus Dumbledore rather than Sirius Black. The spell easily cracked and broke the mirror, but Harry easily noticed the enchantments were still working as he could see pieces of Dumbledore's face in the pieces that falling. Harry then screamed bloody murder and made it sound like Snape was using the Cruciatus, or something worse, on him, repeating the words 'Snape', 'Professor', and 'Why?' between screams.

This behavior actually stunned the former Death Eater enough that he didn't actually fire another spell, though you couldn't tell that from Harry's screams. Harry had even fallen to the ground and screamed directly into the mirror shards, while hiding the fact that he reached for his wand and succeeded in casting a silent stunner, although he might have fit it in with the screams, he couldn't be sure now.

After Snape was safely unconscious on the corridor floor, Harry cut the connection to the mirror and cast a Reparo at it, but unfortunately whatever spell Snape had cast at him interfered with the magic and somehow a lot of the pieces were lost, leaving Harry with a broken mirror that he was still laughing at after midnight in front of the Gryffindor fireplace.

"What's so funny Harry?" asked Ron, having seen him chuckle for the past few minutes now.

Harry laughed out loud and then turned and answered his friend, "Just remembering the look on Snape's face when he was dragged away by the Aurors. It still makes me laugh."

Ron chuckled and nodded, "Yeah, I didn't see the end of it, but I was there for the middle. How did it even start, I mean, to actually go toe-to-toe with a full squad of bloody Aurors? He had to have been insane! And it took them the better part of two and a half hours to actually get a hold of him. Wonder what he was thinking..."

"Probably that he couldn't count on Dumbledore to come to his rescue as always," remarked Harry, taking another sip of his Butterbeer.

"THEY GOT YOU-KNOW-WHO!"

Harry choked and spit out his drink, spraying the face in the fire that had just delivered the message.

"Ew!" Tonks spat the regurgitated magical drink off her face. "Wotcher Harry. Nice spit-take there."

"Tonks, what—" Harry coughed and tried to speak again, "What do you mean they got Voldemort?"

"The Ministry!" the pink-green-amber-indigo-crimson-blonde-brunette-blue . . . haired witch, who kept changing the color of her hair and eyes with each breath, exclaimed. "They caught You-Know-Who and most all of his Followers tonight! About two and a half hours ago by now! He's in custody and the Minister is making apologies to Dumbledore now. I didn't think anyone would be awake. What's all this then?"

"We're celebrating Snape's removal from Hogwarts," Ron shouted over all the noise of everyone celebrating anew behind them. Somebody actually ran out of the Common Room and started shouting up and down all the halls of the school that Voldemort (or 'You-Know-Who') had been caught by the Ministry.

"Oh, him," Tonks's eyes shifted to black while her hair turned a fiery red. "Don't talk to me about that traitor. How are you feeling Harry? He didn't hurt you too bad, did he?"

"Huh? Oh, that, well... you know Madam Pomphrey just loves to get me back on my feet again. I doubt she'd even recall today's from any other days," Harry shrugged off the stares he was getting. "So, what happened, really?"

"Well that's quite a story, sure you want to hear it now?"

"Like anybody's going to sleep now?" Harry gestured to the bedlam behind him.

"Good point," she acknowledged. "Well, as much as I've heard, it started this morning when Umbridge started making a fuss about some note she intercepted going to Snape. You ask me, he probably handed it to her. After he attacked you Harry, she brought in a bunch of Aurors and took him straight to the Minister and my boss, the Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement, Amelia Bones. The result of whatever interrogation they put him under had the entire Ministry under lockdown. People were sent home early, the wards were super-charged and left in a Ready state, and every available Auror was pulled in to provide assistance. Right around closing time for the Ministry, something was done with a Pensieve and Snape and the next thing we know we've got every Death Eater, known and unknown, apparating in, and then the Big Bad himself, You-Know-Who! The wards were put to full power a second later and then we got to fighting them. Bloody big mess. You-Know-Who himself took out a third of the entire Auror corp! But we got him in custody, snapped his wand and everything."

"And then what happened?" Ron asked, riveted by the story.

"And that's it," said Tonks with a happy smile, "The Ministry has You-Know-Who and most all his Death Eaters in custody and they're being shipped out to Azkaban as we speak. Except for You-Know-Who of course. He's being held in a special cell that some Unspeakables in the Department of Mysteries cooked up for him. I'd just thought Harry would like to know, so that's why I'm Floo'ing."

"Wait, what was that about Snape attacking Harry?" Hermione interceded.

"Oh yeah, just before lunch, Snape sort of attacked me out of the blue while I was talking to Sirius and Dumbledore on this mirror that Sirius got me for Christmas," Harry showed them the broken mirror. "I sort of screamed at him when he broke it right in front of me."

"According to Sirius, it sounded like he'd put you under the Cruciatus curse!" Tonks protested.

Harry shrugged and replied, "Whatever it was, it wasn't the Cruciatus curse. That's an Unforgivable, and those can't be blocked remember?" He waved the mirror, making his point.

"Still, won't see me crying over whatever the Ministry did to him," said Harry.

"Well neither will anyone else in the Order," said Tonks. "Even Dumbledore said he'd gone too far and threw him out of the Order. No one will help him out now, not that many were wanting to in the first place."

"So... what now?" Harry asked, seeing that it wasn't even three in the morning yet.

"Enjoy the party! You-Know-Who is gone, or as gone as is possible to get. He'll probably be thrown into the Veil as execution before the end of the night. You don't have anything more to worry about Harry!"

Harry laughed and nodded his head. She was right. Voldemort was as 'out' of the game as he could be without being permanently dead, and according to Tonks that might still happen before the Time Loop reset anyway. Snape was kicked out of the school, out of the Order, and was on everyone's Most Hated list. He was sure he'd never see him again.

Life... the future was looking a lot brighter than it had just a few days previously. Harry was content and he felt that there was nothing and no one else that could ruin that for him.

He enjoyed the rest of the party and finally went off to bed around four thirty, looking forward to tomorrow. As he lay down, he did one last thing, casting a permanent illusion to the top of his canopy bed. It was glowing a bright red and gold and said, 'GRYFFINDOR VICTORY!'

He closed his eyes and went to sleep.

He was awake what felt like only a moment later.

Harry rolled over in bed and glanced at the small clock next to his bed that was pinging the hour. He heard Ron groan something unintelligible, and then a sound like a water balloon and a horrid smell filled the room before being vanished by the refreshing charms that had been in place since midway through Harry's first year. Dean and Seamus both gagged and fled for the washroom. Neville

coughed and then put his pillow over his head before trying to go back to sleep. The door to the washroom slammed shut, eliciting a snort and another fart from Ron.

Harry blinked and then slowly sat up and looked carefully around.

He was in his bed. In his dorm room. The clock said it was now seven o'clock in the morning. The morning light filtering through the window seemed to support this.

Frowning, Harry looked up at the ceiling of his canopy bed and went white as a sheet in the next moment.

There was nothing there.

Disclaimer & Author's Notes: First of all, this chapter hereby begins the REAL reason for the 'Rated M' rating for this story. If it still was an option, it would push it to NC-17 and beyond. Secondly, the next few chapters are going to involve and will utilize plot points that are highly similar to Rorschach Blot's "Ground Hog's Day" and Lionheart's "Partially Kissed Hero". If not in this chapter, then definitely in the next one or five chapters. On a further note, anything in particular you'd like to see Harry try, or have tried, feel free to post a review or send me a PM, or even an e-mail to my e-mail addy. Since it's a time loop fic already, short of anything life-shattering, or that would affect his magic or create permanent magical bonds to himself and others (who would NOT be aware of the time loop) I'll probably put it in. ;)

Oh, be sure to check the bottom of the chapter here. I have kind of a special request that I need serious readers to consider. Enjoy!

Chapter Four: Rules

A week after he'd finally discovered how to beat Voldemort and all his Death Eaters without anyone (that he knew or cared about anyway) getting hurt too badly and woke up still trapped in the time loop, Harry sat down by himself in the Library. Other than the Room of Requirement, it was the one place he could go to get some peace and quiet. After the OWLs exam that is.

Well, to be perfectly honest, it wasn't really a week. It was seven repeated days in a row which just so happened to come after seven or eight repeated days during which he was still figuring out this crazy time loop thing. In the week since, Harry had been testing and trying to see the limits of this time loop, trying to figure out exactly what it was that had happened to him.

He still didn't understand it, or how it could happen. For all he knew, it might have been one of those Time Turners that exploded, or some other time experiment in the Time Room in the Department of Mysteries. Or maybe it had absolutely nothing to do with the Department of Mysteries at all and it was just a fluke of magic, the universe, and being Harry Bloody Potter!

What he did know, after a lot of extensive testing, was that there was no way for him to 'break out' of this time loop. Nothing he had done so far had gotten him even a second past 7AM. Not even

telling Dumbledore about it and getting him to promise his help, and boy was that an unpleasant conversation, didn't change a thing. In fact, that was the whole point, absolutely nothing changed unless Harry changed it. It was a little disturbing really, how he could actually set a clock by certain people's actions and reactions.

Of course, no matter how monotonous a lot of things got, there were some things that Harry never wanted to happen at all, let alone day after day. So when he wasn't trying an experiment to see what could and couldn't be changed and what exactly did and didn't reset every day, he was following along with that last pattern that got Snape fired and distrusted by the Order and got the Ministry ready to take down Dumbledore, but wound up taking out Voldemort instead at the cost of almost half the entire Auror Corp.

He did not want to risk Sirius or any of the people he cared about dying, and he really hated it when Snape dragged him off for Occlumency lessons that he neither wanted nor needed.

Well . . .

OK, he might still need them, but from anybody other than Snape!

So, in an effort to do just that, Harry spoke to Sirius daily now, asking him for help here and there on improving his Occlumency. And of course he had regular means of testing his shields, what with Voldemort trying to send him a false vision every day at three on the dot. Unfortunately, Sirius's advice, without meaning to, was virtually identical to what Snape had been screaming at him to do for months now; clear your mind!

One day, with the exception of writing and placing the note and play-acting that Snape attacked him, he actually spent the whole morning doing nothing but meditating on clearing his mind. Surprisingly it wasn't that hard to do on a moment by moment basis, but to maintain it while there are distractions going on around you, or while someone is actively attacking you, well, that makes things quite a bit harder. Still, by three o'clock he'd sufficiently cleared his mind and when the vision came . . . it made hardly any difference at all. Oh, he could instantly tell that it was a false vision, that it was foreign thoughts being forced towards him with Legilimency, but he couldn't actually defend against it to any degree.

The next morning, he needled and prompted Sirius for the next bit of advice he had, saying every time Sirius said he had to clear his mind, that if he cleared his mind anymore he would be a vegetable. It took about an hour, and Snape 'attacking' him (this time without destroying the mirror), of constant needling him about it, but Sirius finally told him the "ultimate secret" of an Occlumens was . . . a good imagination.

When pressed for a better explanation than that, he stuck to his guns and only repeated the advice he'd already imparted. Even the next morning, when Harry asked him what needing a good imagination would mean for an Occlumens, Sirius acted like he had no idea what Harry meant by that. And then Harry caught him, just once, glancing off-screen, and Harry knew immediately what was going on.

That afternoon, while he was being mentally attacked, while keeping his mind clear, he simultaneously focused really, really, really hard on a chicken. The end result was . . . surprising.

A voice issued from his own mouth, a high, cold voice empty of any human kindness, "Take it for me. . . . Lift it down, now. . . . I cannot touch it . . . but you can. . . ."

The black shape upon the floor shifted a little. Harry saw a long-fingered white hand clutching a wand rise on the end of his own arm, and he heard the high, cold voice say, "Crucio!"

The man on the floor let out a scream of pain, attempted to stand but fell back, writhing. Harry was laughing. He raised his wand, the curse lifted, and the figure groaned and became motionless.

"Lord Voldemort is waiting. . . ."

Very slowly, his arms trembling, the man on the ground raised his shoulders a few inches and lifted his head. His face was bloodstained and gaunt, twisted in pain yet rigid with defiance.

At that moment a rooster, much like the ones seen out by the Hogwarts livestock area, pranced its way between the two figures in the Department of Mysteries. Harry's own eyes tracked its progress, as did 'Sirius'. Then it was gone.

"You'll have to kill me!" whispered Sirius.

"Undoubtedly I shall in the end," said the cold voice. "But you will fetch it for me first, Black . . . You think you have felt pain thus far? Think again . . . We have hours ahead of us and nobody to hear you scream . . ."

Harry's head snapped up, the urge to scream no longer there after the visions from Voldemort these days.

"Well... guess that's what Sirius meant by having a good imagination," he muttered to himself and turned back to his test. He was too engrossed by the concept of his discovery to really notice that his headache wasn't nearly so bad as it had been in the beginning.

The rules of the time loop, as Harry had discovered so far were easy to figure out, but frustrating at the same time. Rule number one, the time loop lasted for exactly twenty-four hours, down to the very second. Rule number two, everything and everybody, besides Harry that is, made the exact same choices and reacted the exact same way to everything, no matter what.

Harry could remember a science experiment from his Primary School days where they were working with a very basic concept of Chaos Theory, in that nothing happens the same way twice. They did this by dropping a water melon off the top of the school building and taking a picture of it, before dropping a near-identical watermelon off in the exact same spot. The pictures, when compared, were very different and they spent the next week discussing how impossible it is to control all the variables in any given situation.

Just to see, Harry recreated that experiment at Hogwarts, only instead of doing it minutes apart, he did it a day apart. He memorized every facet of the splash pattern that he could, even drawing a painting of it and memorizing the painting. When looking at the watermelons he dropped, he could see differences in the splash pattern and even where it fell. Then he had Ron and Hermione try it and did the same day-to-day comparison. They were identical every single day, no matter what way he looked at it. The only change was when he changed a variable.

This of course lead him to rules three, four, and five. Harry was the only one not affected by the time loop and thus the only one to 'remember' things. Any changes made, even to his own body, were negated when the time loop reset, because they 'hadn't happened yet'. And the real big one, he could not be killed or die, because the moment he did, he reset and woke up in his bed.

There were lots of other little things that he noticed and often made note of, but the Big Five, what he privately called them, were the most important of the rules of the time loop. Unfortunately, he had to add a sixth rule after a certain point, and he didn't lop it in with the Big Five because he sincerely hoped to disprove it some day. The sixth rule is, Nothing Can Break The Time Loop!

There was no written precedent of anything like this happening that Harry could find anywhere, and there was no spell, or magical device, or special thing to do that could get somebody out of a time loop! Any time he asked for help from the people he usually asked for help from just lead him around in circles. Hermione wanted to research. Ron wanted to to ask Professor Dumbledore. Sirius thought he was playing a prank and even after saying he believed Harry, it was obvious he never did. Professor Dumbledore believed him, but admitted that he knew of no way of breaking out of a time loop without first knowing what caused it. And the things he suggested to Harry to try in order to discover the origin of the time loop when so far over his head that he wound up slamming his head against every hard surface he could until he woke up back in his bed.

All of that eventually and ultimately led him here, to the Hogwarts Library, trying to find something about Time Magic or anything like it. The first few times he came in here, he had no place to start, and wound up just pulling random books off random shelves and screaming when they didn't have his answers. Madam Pince, the librarian that looked as much like a vulture as Umbridge a toad, threw him out by mid-morning every time. Then, on Hermione's suggestion when he'd told her one day he was going to the Library to study, he actually approached the Librarian on his own and politely requested her help. She impassively told him where to look and glared when he made too much noise.

The next time, he tried to be extra nice and even asked her to show him where to look for what he needed. She did, but if he didn't know better, he would have sworn she was Snape's sister, or at the very

least learned her people skills from him. Which got him thinking, what would Hermione be like if he and Ron weren't a part of her life? He remembered her know-it-all attitude from First Year and her respect for books and knowledge in general. Perhaps, just perhaps, she would have turned out a bit like Madam Pince here?

Curious to see how right, or wrong, he was about that supposition, the next time Harry approached the Librarian, he introduced himself and his problem much like he would to Hermione, just without the same familiarity. An off-the-wall comment from him got an unexpected reaction out of the stiff and dispassionate witch, and he pursued it out of equal parts fascination and curiosity. To which she replied with pleasant surprise and marked enthusiasm.

He got much further in his search for answers, only to discover that Hogwarts held no answers for his plight. Madam Pince knew, and in fact had read every book that had ever been part of her library. When Harry described what he was looking for, she took him immediately to the only books that held anything about such fanciful ideas. He scoured them cover to cover and more. One was an entirely fictional account about a weatherman in the Americas being stuck in the day February 2nd in a small middle-of-nowhere town, and the rest were all school books or other educational materials that happened to include or discuss the various 'time-keeping' and 'clock' spells that were all commonplace in the Wizarding World.

Although the fictional story gave him some ideas, when he tried to employ them, mostly consisting of getting back together with Cho, so far everything he had tried bombed, and bombed bad. It was why he was hiding out in the Library now actually, his latest attempt at getting back together with Cho had went sort of side-ways on him and now suddenly Ron and Cho were dating, while he, Hermione, Ginny, and oddly enough Luna were in some kind of love-triangle-square thing that was entirely fabricated rumor.

He considered skipping out on the OWL test today, but the one time (yes, only one time) he'd tried that... well, there are lots of sayings for "Hell Unleashed" and all that. Of course that was his 'training day', the day he found out he was still stuck in a time loop and went straight to the Room of Requirement and hadn't left for the entire day. By the time he finally came out, after supper, the entire school was in an uproar and the Ministry of Magic had gotten involved not to mention Dumbledore and Sirius had got themselves caught by

coming to the school after he hadn't shown up for OWLs, and Ron and Hermione were as bad as he'd ever seen them. At one point, the point at which he'd showed up actually, Hermione had been on the verge of really killing Ron!

It was... well, it was definitely different, but it was also extremely weird and he wasn't ready for that yet. And besides, the Ministry got involved only after he missed taking his OWL and he really didn't want that!

Fortunately, he'd gotten better at diffusing Voldemort's visions, putting numerous odd little things here and there in the vision that distracted either himself or Voldemort and lessening the pain in the aftermath, and as stated previously, after the OWL's are done the Hogwarts Library becomes a place of contemplative silence once more. Of course you could still find the random Ravenclaw here and there, and when they came across Harry in his hideaway nook, there was the inevitable giggling and gawking, but given that his nook was close to the office of the Librarian, such disruptions were few and far between.

The party at Gryffindor tower had gotten old pretty quick, surprisingly. Without the Weasley Twins there to liven things up, such events quickly became dull and routine. It was boring in other words.

Of course sitting alone in the library wasn't much better for his boredom, but at least it was quiet and allowed him to meditate on clearing his mind. The only thing worse than boring was annoying, and having to experience the exact same Gryffindor party again and again fell across that line, repeatedly.

Maybe he should try going to one of the other House Parties?

Hm...

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"You can't be serious!"

"No, that's my godfather," Harry grinned, while privately vowing to never make that joke again, seeing the reaction he got from the pretty girl he was talking to.

"All right Harry," Cho Chang shyly put forth the challenge, "IF you can prove to me that you can get Snape fired before the end of the day... I'll invite you to the Ravenclaw party tonight. Today is the last day of OWLs for our Fifth Years, and there are only three that are taking the Divination NEWT tomorrow, and they're honest-to-Morgana seers, so they won't have any trouble on that at all, so we were planning a private party tonight anyway."

"Yeah, but what about a 'Snape is gone for good' party?" asked Harry, staring into the petite young witch's eyes. She flushed bright red and ducked her head, her smooth black tresses veiling her face.

"I'll ask around, but if Snape doesn't get fired today..." said Cho, right as the Aurors came out of the Great Hall, dragging a beaten and manacled Snape, while Umbridge and the Minister of Magic himself marched along behind with their noses held high.

"Ahem," Harry coughed softly to get his girlfriend's attention back, "You were saying my dear?"

"Harry—you—he—how—that was—how did you—?" she stuttered, looking back and forth to where Snape had been dragged out and Harry. Finally, some conflict in her mind seemed to be resolved, and she turned to stare at him with a look he'd never seen before in her eyes. "Harry? How did you know that was going to happen?"

"Because I made it happen," he stated simply. "Just like I know there's going to be a lot of parties going on tonight, and to be honest, Gryffindor parties have gotten kind of old since the Twins headed out. I'm more interested," he stepped closer, into her personal space, "in what kind of parties," he stepped even closer so most of their bodies were touching now, "Ravenclaws get up to." He whispered the last bit directly into her ear, and he couldn't help but be pleased when he felt her whole body shiver after he did that.

He was real glad he'd read through a few more fictional books from the library after he'd finished with that one about the weatherman stuck in his own time loop. There was this one book, Casanova that

really filled in a lot of the blanks that had been present in his "relationship" with Cho. He was working to correct that now.

"Um—um, h-h-Harr-ry," she gasped, "I-I-I-I-I—"

"Say yes, and I'll meet you outside your Common Room after my OWLs are finished. And this time," he said to her, holding her face with one hand, "I promise I won't let Hermione, or anyone, get in the way of our fun. All right?" He brushed her hair back over her ear with his other hand.

"O-oh-oh-ok..." she gulped and nodded her head.

Then he kissed her, just for a moment, on the lips, and walked away shortly after that. That was what the character in the book did every time he left a woman's presence it seemed. He'd have to see how well it worked.

That evening, he was waiting outside the suit of armor guarding the Ravenclaw Common Room. He knew about the whole riddle thing, but he wasn't exactly good at that sort of thing. He'd actually gone around to all the other Common Rooms and discovered that only Slytherin and Gryffindor actually had passwords. Ravenclaw had a suit of armor that asked you riddles, and Hufflepuff had a secret catch that only Hufflepuffs knew about. Well, Hufflepuffs, and now him, after watching a couple of First Years enter their Common Room under his Invisibility Cloak. It was a combination lock of all things, tapping a brick here, a knob on the portrait frame there, and a bunch of other stuff before yanking down on the torch holder on the wall and using it like a door latch. He even, the 'other night' for him, followed a few older years to make sure the combination was the same for everyone. It was.

Cho exited the Common Room a few minutes after he arrived, holding the door open for him and looking embarrassed and quite shame-faced now that he was there. After he walked in the door, he wasn't quite sure whether that was because of him, or because of the Ravenclaw 'party' that was going on.

There were streamers, blue and bronze of course, and what looked like the same games that every wizard and witch play indoors. And one particular game, which seemed to be the most popular, that no

Gryffindor in living memory had ever played. The magical version of Trivial Pursuit®, Ravenclaw Anti-Snape edition.

The Dursley's often hosted dinner parties, and Trivial Pursuit® was one of the more common 'adult' games that such guests insisted on playing.

"Great party, huh?" bubbled Cho beside him.

Ah, that explained that, she was embarrassed of him. He couldn't wait to see why.

"Well, it's definitely different, and different is definitely what I was looking for," he freely admitted. "There are at least drinks from the kitchens or Hogsmeade, right?"

"Pumpkin juice, tomato juice, and something one of our muggleborn introduced us to recently, fruit smoothies!" she pointed to a table of goblets set right in front of the bust of Rowena Ravenclaw.

The Trivial Pursuit® game was being held in the library, which actually took up more than half of the room, while the other games were being played by others in front of the fireplace and in the open study areas. Harry was absolutely convinced without even having to be told that they were used exactly what they were intended for and that they were definitely study areas. There was no loud music playing, nobody was talking loudly, in fact he and Cho were the loudest and most talkative of the entire room, and they'd said exactly four sentences to one another.

"Let's get some snacks," Harry suggested, leading the way to the table.

"Huh, nice tiara," he commented while trying one of the fruit smoothies. It wasn't bad.

One of the Fourth Year boys across from him at the snack table coughed, restraining a laugh, rather poorly at that.

"It's a diadem, Rowena Ravenclaw's diadem," said Cho quietly and quickly.

"Looks like a tiara," he shrugged, unfortunately not missing Cho's look of abject humiliation. This was not going well.

"Hey, Luna!" he called suddenly, glad to see a friendly face.

"Hello Harry," said the blonde witch, her eyes darting all around Harry and Cho's head. "There's quite an infestation of wrackspurts between the two of you. My father is planning to do an expose on them later this summer. I do hope you'll read it."

"What are wrackspurts?" asked Harry, not hearing Cho's warning in time.

"No, Harry, don't—!"

"Wrackspurts are tiny little creatures that enter through the ear and make you head go all fuzzy," answered Luna matter-of-factly. "My father says they are only attracted to those with no sense of propriety, but I seem to think they mostly like teenagers."

Harry tilted his head and thought about what she said, and then asked, "But how could you tell the difference between a teenager infected with these spurters, and a normal teenager?"

"Yes, it's most excellent camouflage, is it not?"

"Harry, let's go join the game, shall we?" Cho suddenly drug him off to the library.

"Bye Luna!" he called.

"Bye Harry!" she called back, actually waving at him.

What followed was quite possibly the most insanely boring two hours of Harry's life. It took him about half that time to even learn how the game was played, all during which he was constantly belittled and silently teased for being a lumbering neanderthal. He was about ready to just walk out and call the whole thing a bad idea, but then much later in the evening, Terry Boot came to his 'defense' by telling everyone in the room that it wasn't his fault he was so stupid and that they should stop rubbing it in his face.

He didn't use those exact words, in fact add about another fifty or so and include a theoretical model minus the diagrams and it still boiled down to meaning the same thing.

That right there made up Harry's mind very quickly. He would show these... Ravenclaws, and he would show them by beating them at their own games. Literally.

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"Great party, huh?" bubbled Cho beside him.

Harry nodded his head, and commented, "Could do with some music. Not necessarily the popular stuff. Something classical, that enhances the mind and moves the spirit. Of course they could do with out the decorations. Parties are about the people, not the setting." He grinned and put his arm around her shoulders.

Cho blinked, surprised by his reaction somewhat, but not entirely happy with the answer as she quickly slipped out of his embrace. His eyebrow arched almost automatically as he observed her actions, taking in everything that he could.

"Let's get some snacks," Harry suggested, leading the way to the table.

"Huh, nice tiara," he commented while trying one of the fruit smoothies. Different flavor this time.

One of the Fourth Year boys across from him at the snack table coughed, restraining a laugh, rather poorly at that.

"It's a diadem, Rowena Ravenclaw's diadem," said Cho quietly and quickly.

"The legendary lost diadem that grants the wearer unparalleled wisdom?" he clarified after a quick swallow. She glanced at him, but still looked around with a nervous sort of energy. He frowned. Another miss.

"Hey, Luna!" he called suddenly, glad to see a friendly face.

"Hello Harry," said the blonde witch, her eyes darting all around Harry and Cho's head. "There's quite an infestation of wrackspurts between the two of you. My father is planning to do an expose on them later this summer. I do hope you'll read it."

"Looking forward to it," he acknowledged. "Wrackspurts... aren't they those creatures that use teenagers as camouflage while they extract energy from the brain in order to reproduce?"

Cho and Luna both looked at him with surprise.

"What?" he asked, finishing his smoothie.

Luna sighed and shook her head, walking off without a word.

"What?" he asked Cho.

"Uh, come on, lets go join the game. I'm sure you'll have a lot of fun with it!" she seemed to get some of her perkiness back.

This time around, Cho at least let him play, although usually it was just to roll the dice or move the pieces while she answered the questions and got the points for them. They didn't even place in the end, and people were still looking at him like he was just a really dumb toddler. He made sure to pay very close attention to all the questions being asked this time around.

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"Great party, huh?"

"Honestly?" Harry asked her, his expression indicating to her that it was a real question he wanted an answer to.

She pouted, looking annoyed, but she also crossed her arms across her chest and slouched away from him some, before replying, "... Yes..."

"It's great. Exactly what I was looking for. Different, definitely different," he smiled at her and put his arm over her shoulders, pulling her close to him.

She smiled back with relief and did nothing to try and get away from him. Progress.

"Let's see, what have we got in way of beverages?" asked Harry as they sauntered over to the snack bar.

"Oh yes," she answered dutifully, "Pumpkin juice, tomato juice, and something one of our muggleborn introduced us to recently, fruit smoothies!"

"Hm, let's try the tomato juice tonight," he decided.

"Huh, nice tiara," he commented while sipping a goblet of tomato juice.

One of the Fourth Year boys across from him at the snack table coughed, restraining a laugh, rather poorly at that.

"It's a diadem, Rowena Ravenclaw's diadem," said Cho quietly and quickly.

"Diadem, a crown or headband worn in ancient days, often by royalty, originally from the Greek diadema, meaning to tie or bend around," Harry quoted. "But in this particular instance, I believe we're discussing the legendary lost diadem of Rowena Ravenclaw, rumored to grant the wearer infinite wisdom. Last seen in the hands of her daughter, Helena Ravenclaw, who was brutally murdered by her estranged fiance, the Baron of Hogwarts Valley. Today I believe they're known as the Grey Lady and the Bloody Baron. Tragic story really. Tragic indeed."

He finished off the last of his last goblet of tomato juice staring at the bust, and after setting it down, said to the bust, "Good evening Luna, how are you enjoying the party?"

Everyone that had gathered around at Harry's impromptu speech jumped and spun around, surprised to see Luna staring at the back of Harry's and Cho's heads, or rather the back of Harry's as Cho had turned around as well.

"I am doing quite well this evening, Harry," replied Luna. "There's quite an infestation of wrackspurts between you and Miss Chang. My father is planning to do an expose on them later this summer. I do hope you'll read it."

Harry turned, this time with a goblet of pumpkin juice, in hopes of washing away the tomato taste, and said to Luna, "And miss an article by one of the foremost experts of the strange and unexplained? Not on my life. I've already got a subscription of course, and I look forward to every issue. I'll make sure Hermione reads up on it with her own issues. She'd hate to suffer the consequences of an unfiltered wrackspurt infestation."

"Oh?" Luna blinked in surprise, as did half the room.

"Well, no slight to my date for the evening," he stared into Cho's eyes for but a moment, "but if there is anything that I know about my just friend Hermione, it's that she hates to have her thoughts go fuzzy on her. Probably why she argues so much with Ron come to think of it. Negative emotions damper the natural pheromones that are theorized to attract wrackspurts in the first place. Of course these pheromones also aid in the natural attraction of a mate, biologically speaking, which could explain why it is that wrackspurts are found infesting primarily teenagers, and young adults that are not yet married, or are soon to be married."

"Hm, yes, I can see the logic of those observations," said Luna.

"Of course it gives them brilliant camouflage, doesn't it?" he remarked. "When you think about it I mean. How can one tell the difference between a normal teenager and one infested with wrackspurts?"

"Indeed," said Luna, smiling.

"Until you factor in the pheromones again," said Harry. "And then it starts to make more sense. After all, living creatures, no matter their size, species, or origins, if it's alive, it follows three basic instincts, instincts that are basic to all life."

Harry went on, "The instinct to feed, the instinct to survive, and the instinct to reproduce. Now we can't say enough about the wrackspurt environment or physiology to say whether or not they flock to humans out of protection or some other survival instinct, so that leaves us with the instinct to feed, or reproduce. And it could be either really. They could be feeding off of certain energies given off by brainwaves and their consumption of such energies result in the 'fuzziness' of the brain. Or, far more likely, they require the same... let's call it neural energy that humans generate during our own... mating process, and in order to more easily promote such energies, they affect the environment of their host, or hosts as the case may be, by interfering, or fuzzing up their natural thought processes. After all, if an uninfested couple start the mating process, so to speak, their thoughts and minds might either stop them from completing it, or they might take precautions that would prevent them from actually mating successfully. Whereas a couple infested with wrackspurts, well, their thoughts would be too fuzzy to focus on anything but each other and completing the mating process until they were done. Repeatedly in most cases more than likely."

"That is an interesting theory, Harry," said Luna, "I'll have to share that with my father. If you don't mind that is."

"Not at all," Harry shook his head, putting down the goblet. Pumpkins and tomatoes do not mix well. "I'd actually look forward to having a pleasant debate with him about a number of his theories. Such as all the stuff he wrote about Fudge. Having met the Minister, I can honestly say that I don't believe the man is capable of doing even a tenth of the things your father claims he's done."

Luna frowned minutely.

"The people behind the Minister of Magic however, that's another case entirely," said Harry, being entirely serious. He was actually talking about Death Eaters and bribery moguls like Malfoy, but he was fully prepared to believe that there could be a whole lot of other people doing the same things.

Luna's eyes went wide, and if Harry didn't know her better, he'd think she was about to run up and kiss him or something. Instead, she looked around, much more focused than before on the people than anything else this time. Then she looked Harry in the eye, winked and nodded her head once before moving on.

"I just hope it is not the Hufflepuffs," said Luna with genuine fear in her voice that only Harry heard.

"They run everything," Harry explained to Cho, as she had explained the image of the diadem to him.

"Uh... let's, let's go join the game, shall we Harry?" she said after some brief hesitation.

He couldn't quite tell, but he'd say that she was still trying to figure out what was going on with him. Good. He wanted her as unbalanced as he could get her so he could really wow her later on.

They joined in the Trivial Pursuit® like game, of which the only real difference was that the 'board' was a three dimensional representation of Hogwarts castle, and the kinds of questions asked. Oh, and there was also the magic component, but all that was just moving the pieces and the 'spinner'. Everybody played in teams, and the team sizes could vary from a couple, just two, to half the Seventh Years all in one group.

One thing that could be said that Ravenclaws were better at than Gryffindors, beyond academics, was they were more serious and more extreme in their wagers than even the most reckless Gryffindor. When it came to prizes in the games they played, there was a whole lot more on the line than just some Chocolate Frog cards or some extra candies or joke kits here and there. The winner of this game got a slip to the Restricted Section of the Hogwarts Library, good to the end of the year. One of the Seventh Years who'd gotten it from Professor Flitwick had wagered it, and it was why half the Seventh Years were on one team as well, as none of them wanted to explain what a younger-year was doing with that permission slip.

This time around, Harry answered roughly half of their questions, surprising Cho and stopping the looks from the others once and for all. Because every single one of his answers were absolutely correct. On more than a few of them, since this was the Anti-Snape edition, he actually provided more information than was strictly required by the game.

After the game, they came in fifth place and the Seventh Years got to keep the slip, Cho was a lot more friendly towards him, and

instead of browsing the library for books on the diadem or spending the night talking with Luna, she invited him to play the rest of the games that were being hosted around Ravenclaw Tower. Most everything was like the Trivial Pursuit® game, requiring a heavier than normal mental quotient, but they were all games he was a great deal more familiar with, such as Wizard's Chess. And oddly enough, Poker.

"So," Harry said as he worked at memorizing the cheat sheet he'd been handed, "the whole point of this is to calculate the odds of what hands each player has, and then compare the total value combined with the five cards already dealt by the dealer? And you wager not on having the highest value, but how accurate your predictions are for each player?"

"There was too much of an uncontrolled variable the normal way, it relied as much on luck as the ability to read people," Cho explained to him.

He did rather poorly the first time, and Cho was back to half-ignoring him by the time they switched back to Wizard's Chess and Exploding Snaps. At the end of the evening, he got a hug and a friendly smile. Considering every night before, which had always ended before curfew time anyway, with a less-than-friendly smile and a wave, it was quite an improvement. Especially since it was a quarter till midnight.

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"That's actually a misnomer," Harry pointed out to the card-reader, "Severus Snape was hired by Professor Dumbledore to Hogwarts staff on November 2nd, 1981, shortly after midnight on the night of the 1st. Though he did not join the staff in teaching until after the Christmas holidays concluded in January of 1982, and even then he only assisted the active Potions professor, a Professor Horace Slughorn, until the end of term. He began his position as Potions Professor the next semester, starting in September of 1982."

Everyone was staring, slack-jawed at the overly complex and highly detailed answer to the final question; "When did Professor Snape begin his tenure at Hogwarts as Potions Professor?"

It had actually been the Seventh Years team's question, but by interceding and correcting the one that had answered, the same Seventh Year that had actually put up the Restricted Section slip as the prize, Harry and Cho got the point. Which meant that they won!

Harry dominated Cho in Chess. Five times in a row. Something to be said about playing regularly against one of the best chess players in the whole school.

Instead of going straight to poker, Cho dragged him to one of the other wager games being played. This one was also a partner game, but you had to get them to say or guess the word by using synonyms or phrases without ever using the word. The prize was a book on dueling from the private collection of Professor Flitwick himself. Or to be more accurate, a book by Filius Flitwick on dueling. Harry really wanted that book.

Cho was really good at the game, able to guess the word after only a few words from him. He, on the other hand, took at least half a dozen phrases each word, and usually had quite a few wrong guesses before finally getting it. In the end, however, it turned out they were tied for second place, and by this point Harry was getting better at reading his girlfriend's signals, whether he was hot or cold in guessing the word.

They got second place, and got some of the best auto-dictation quills he'd ever seen, but he was kind of disappointed they didn't get that book. Cho, on the other hand, was as happy as he'd seen her yet, and almost gleefully dragged him over to the poker table. He did much better this time around.

Half past midnight, the poker game was still going strong, and Harry and Cho both were staying in the game, though barely in Harry's case. The change from betting on having the winning hand, to betting on how accurate your calculations on what the others all had made things a lot more difficult, but a lot more challenging for him too. He was still working on counting the cards and keeping the equation for the calculations straight in his head, but he was getting better at it, not that there was anyone to mark his progress.

When he finally left, about one in the morning, with about five galleons worth of chips in his pocket (the chips were in the knuts

and sickle range, so it was quite a few chips), Cho escorted him out, wrapped her arms around his neck and keeping her body close to his and gave him the driest kiss she'd ever given him, but just as intimate as their first kiss at Christmas. She still drew away when he tried to feel her up a bit though, so not as much progress as his libido had been hoping for, but a great deal of progress nevertheless.

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"He was hired by Headmaster Dumbledore in November 1981, began as Assistant Professor in January 1982, but did not begin as the actual Potions Professor until the 82-83 semester that September."

"He's hosted only one official game of Quidditch, the Griffindor/Hufflepuff match in February 1992."

"Turns out that Severus Snape owns a patent on a special hair tonic that prevents people from losing their hair during potion accidents, indicating that it is something he developed himself, most likely for himself as there was one year, in 1985, that people say the Potions Professor of Hogwarts was actually bald. The greasy look is just a side-effect from the hair tonic that keeps it from falling out."

Everyone gaped and stared as he finished with the last answer. He'd been answering everybody's answers during the game, and while a great many were glaring at him with annoyance and animosity, Cho had practically plastered her body against his for the last twenty minutes.

After they won the Restricted Section slip, they went straight to the Guessing Game, as Harry privately called it. It was actually named something else entirely, but it was a mispronounceable name based on a Greek and Latin combination of words that at its heart meant "Guess Word". Harry never handed out the cards and after the first couple he knew which pattern of cards they were on, as there were only three variations, when they got their early, when they got there after Chess, and when they got there after only one game of Chess. Cho used the same descriptive synonyms each and every time, so it wasn't that hard. After learning which pattern they were on though, Harry only let her say one single thing before announcing what the

word was. He also proved he wasn't cheating by blindfolding himself and taking off his glasses so he couldn't see the cards or Cho.

They won the book. Cho was smiling brightly and not letting go of his hands for a moment. He proceeded to dominate her in Chess for about ten games, using different tactics, but the same overall strategy each and every time; isolate and take out the queen first before cornering the king as quickly as possible.

Cho was flushed bright red by the time they made their way to the poker table. They had missed out on the earlier game, as it was already past ten by this point, and it was full up. But Cho got some other people together and then showed Harry a secret that the Ravensclaws had figured out about the wards protecting the female dorm staircase from boys entering. She put him on a 'magic carpet' and told him not to touch anything but the carpet itself until they were to her room. Harry was impressed, and briefly confused as to why Hermione had never figured this out. Then he remembered what most of the Gryffindor boys were like and decided he would not share this secret with any of them.

Besides him and Cho, the rest of those playing were Marietta Edgecombe, Mandy Brocklehurst, Su Li, Lisa Turpin, Padma Patil, and Luna Lovegood. With the exception of Luna and Padma, all were typically part of Cho's group of friends she was always hanging around. Harry also couldn't help but notice that every one of the players, save himself, were of the female persuasion.

"So," said Harry as he shuffled the cards, "Same rules as downstairs, from what I observed it was more about betting on the calculations each person could make, or should we go old fashioned and let it remain a game of chance and people watching?"

He ignored the wide-eyed stares he was getting as he shuffled the cards. He'd been doing this for weeks now, and he'd really improved on his shuffling skills, as the few times he couldn't rely on his memory of what people had said when he shuffled the cards, so he'd been forced to become a card shark out of desperation. Besides, it wasn't that hard once you knew how to do it.

"L-let's m-make it interesting, all right girls?" offered Cho, at first nervous, but with gaining confidence. "We'll switch to the old rules

just for this game, but also, instead of knuts and sickles... let's wager clothing and—and dares."

"And kisses. Kisses are worth I'd say about twice what an article of clothing would be and it would also exclude them from being part of a dare," added Harry with confidence.

Most of the girls gulped, but nodded their heads. They magically expanded one of the beds, and oddly enough the room seemed to stretch and move accordingly, one or more of the other beds temporarily vanishing along with other furniture to make room for a bed that could suddenly hold eight seated people without any of them getting close to the edge.

"Also, let's do individual articles of clothing, like one sock, one shoe, ties, all that," Harry suggested, knowing by now that if he didn't more than half of them would chicken out the moment even one of them had to take off her blouse or skirt. Also, the game went too quickly when they did just general items, and the longer it went for, the more—involved—the Ravenclaw girls would become, and that's what he wanted. It was also why he'd added the thing about the kisses. The dares, Cho only offered after he'd trounced her in Chess more than ten times, and in her mind it was him that was going to be naked and answering to all the dares of each of her friends. Well, him and Luna, which was why she'd been invited in the first place.

Little did they know...

"All rightie then ladies, pick your poison; Five Card Draw, Seven Card Stud, or Texas Hold'em?"

He wasn't sure of his own tells, yet, but they could usually tell when he was getting better at one of the three than the others from something he said or did, and he'd master Five Card early on and most recently had become quite proficient at Seven Card. Texas Hold'em was what they played downstairs, and he still had trouble with the calculations. Thus they ended up playing Texas Hold'em.

Harry dealt first. He bet first on the flop, raised on the turn, and folded on the river. It got rid of his shoes, which were uncomfortable on the bed as it was. Also, he had nothing the entire hand. Luna won instead, with three of a kind on the river.

An hour later, Harry had on his shirt, pants and underclothes and had kissed Cho, Luna, and Padma each through various bets here and there. None of the girls had any jewelry left, as that had been rule number one right there, no winning back clothes. Of course that rule had been in place to keep Harry naked and humiliate Luna, but apparently not all of the girls were as gifted with Poker as they thought they were. Luna still had her tie, stockings, shirt, skirt and underclothes, but she was also the most dressed out of all of them. The others were missing either more items, because some of them had worn more items of clothing or more jewelry than the others, but pretty much everyone recognized it was getting down to the wire as it were.

It was Harry's deal again, and he decided to make things interesting. "All right girls, I can tell things are about to get uncomfortable, so I'm offering you this one and one time only out," he said. "We can stop, or you can leave the game and I swear none of us will think the lesser of you for it. In fact if one of you leaves, others will probably join you and we, Cho and I, can move on to... other games." He winked at his girlfriend, an action none of them missed.

"However," he intruded upon their jealous thoughts, "if we all stay and continue playing, then we play until we all agree that we're finished. No majority rules, it has to be unanimous that we all stop. Also, Cho mentioned that we'll be betting dares. I say that the dares can only take place inside this room, as we'd have to interrupt the game for anything else. And one more thing, if you are willing to make this addition to the rules... but no, I mean, you're Ravenclaws. Ravenclaws don't need to... no, just no."

"What?" asked Cho, rising to the bait as he knew she would.

"Yeah, tell us!" Marietta chimed in, and soon all the others, even Luna, were asking to know what his suggestion was.

"Well," he 'reluctantly' told them, "I was just thinking that some of you are really not going to like doing the dares, and I was thinking that we could introduce the concept of 'Double Dares', where you could refuse to do a dare that you lost and win it back the next hand. But. If you lost, then you'd have to do a double dare, something even worse, in whatever way, than the original dare. And if you really wanted to, well, we could also do the Ultimate Dare. It's sort of

like a double double dare, so you'd have like four chances to cancel out the dare debt. But that's way too risky..."

"What's the Ultimate Dare?" Padma asked nervously.

"You have to be the slave of whoever wins the last hand played. And then obviously you would be out of the game," Harry answered as though stating a fact.

"Let's do it!" Marietta agreed instantly, her eyes shooting back and forth between Cho and Harry.

"Well, that's one, and obviously I'm the one who suggested it, so that's two," said Harry.

Very shortly they all agreed to the new terms, most of them looking to Harry expectantly. Harry just smiled at them, and decided to stop holding back. He'd spent the entire day so far, when he wasn't speaking with Cho, practicing his card skills, and his people reading skills had improved by leaps and bounds in the weeks since this time loop had started. He was starting to view these Resets as the greatest thing that had ever happened to him, right up there with Hagrid finding and telling him he was a wizard.

After midnight, Harry and Luna were the only ones clothed. Albeit, Harry was dressed the same as he was earlier, and Luna was only wearing her white lace silk bikini panties, but the fact remained. Harry was still betting his clothing and kisses, but everyone else was stuck with betting dares. Even Luna felt it safer to bet on a dare that she only had to perform if her hand was the lowest, which it rarely was, than to trade away the last of her dignity, as all the other girls had. Most of them were really regretting that they had started vanishing the clothing right off their bodies rather than just taking them off and putting them in a pile in the middle.

Harry always had the winning hand now, even when he was not the dealer. Whether it was from what he was dealt, or some lucky draw on the river, he always won, which meant that he was the one that issued the dares to the loser. He, and Luna, were also the only ones that refused to stop playing.

Harry was quite enjoying his journey of sexual discovery here in Ravenclaw tower. The very first time Cho had brought him up here

to play strip poker, he'd been scared out of his mind, and highly nervous and could hardly concentrate on anything at all. That first time, he and Luna were the first ones naked and doing various dares for all the girls. Luna was also the first girl he ever got to see naked, and that was probably why Cho threw the rest of her hands that night until she was just as naked and Harry's eyes were like a couple of ping pong balls going back and forth between the two very naked girls sitting before him.

He didn't lose his virginity... well his virginity as far as he was concerned... until he got over his nervousness and was not the first one naked. It was to Cho, by the way, and not on a dare, but after she'd kicked everyone out and gave herself to him that very night. Well, to her it was 'that very night', but to him it was after five days of back-to-back strip poker game nights.

He had his very first threesome a 'week' later, after learning which buttons to press. The first one was with Cho and Marietta, the only girl she'd ever consider doing anything like that with, and one that definitely did not mind being with Cho. The next night he started trying to include Luna. It only took him three tries to get it exactly right, and it depended on Luna spending as much time with him and Cho as he did with Ron and Hermione. He resolved to do that regularly, because that Luna is a wildcat in bed! It's always the quiet ones.

He had his first orgy last night, and it hadn't required much foresight, just keep the game going for long enough without any of them leaving. This tonight however, he was going for the whole pot and then some.

So far he'd had his feet and back massaged, watched each girl, including Luna, masturbate herself to orgasm, masturbated each and every girl to orgasm, and had his cock sucked by his girlfriend. That last one had required a double dare, the first one being that she make out with Marietta.

Luna was dealing, he won with a four-of-a-kind, having the fourth card in his hand, while everybody else just got a three-of-a-kind from the river. Cho, who continuously refused to fold no matter what, lost. He dared her to masturbate Marietta. She went with a double dare. Next hand, Harry won again, everyone but Cho folded before the flop. Cho raised her double dare with a triple dare by the river, sure

she could win with the cards she had. The river favored Harry's hand more than hers, but only by tallied points as they had identical hands beyond that. He dared her to masturbate Marietta and Luna at the same time while they did the same to her, if they were so inclined.

Cho drew pale, looking fearfully between the two girls, Luna who stared at her passively, and Marietta who had a hungry look in her eyes. Cho took the Ultimate Dare.

It was Harry's turn to deal once again. He gave himself the Ace of Hearts and the Ace of Spades, and put the next two Aces to where they would be drawn on the turn and the river with three tens before that, and gave Cho the fourth ten. The others got crap. They folded before the flop. Cho kept her excitement poorly contained, looking hungrily at Harry, and made him a bet he couldn't refuse.

"How about a little side bet action, Harry?" she offered.

"Oh?" he questioned, about to flip over the river. "Why kind of side bet action?"

"Well, it's not exactly fair, you being fully clothed and us being all . . . naked," she pouted cutely at him, but he just looked at her expectantly. "And since I'm already doing the Ultimate Dare, I don't have anything more to offer, but since it is the Ultimate Dare, you should offer something to match, don't you think?"

"Like all of my clothes?" he laughed, "That's not much of a side bet, but yet, I'm game. If you win, not only is your Ultimate Dare wiped clean, I'll strip naked for all you ladies. Of course that will make Luna our defacto winner. Unless... you had something else in mind?"

"What about you taking the Ulitmate Dare?" she offered.

This time he really did laugh out loud. "Now what could you possibly offer that would make me take a bet like that?"

"How about all our Ultimate Dares against yours?" bet Cho.

"WHAT!" the collective screech echoed throughout the room. They argued for several very long minutes, but in the end, Cho, Luna, Su Li and Marietta put up their own Ultimate Dares against Harry's. If

Cho won, she would 'own' him but she'd be sharing him with all of them just the same. The rest weren't so confident in Cho's poker skills, or couldn't see through Harry's game like Luna could. He wasn't too sure about what was going through her mind, but apparently being his slave was better than being alone for her.

One flip of the card later, he had himself four naked slaves and finally agreed that the game was over and done. There was a reason he'd invoked the whole slave thing as "the Ultimate Dare". It was a variation on the Unbreakable Vow, but one determined by the results of a competition between magical creatures. It was, according to rumor, how the House Elves became what they are today.

He enjoyed watching Cho perform the Double Dare she'd refused to do earlier while Su Li gave him a rather boring blow job, girl had no experience at all, and then sampled each of his new slaves fully before the night was through. He kept the orgy going in new and interesting ways until six o'clock, and then he spent the last hour just talking with them, asking them questions, learning about them, learning everything there was to know about these young witches, knowing they would no longer be his tomorrow.

And then time reset and he did it all again the next night, and the next, and the next, until he actually had every one of those girls taking the Ultimate Dare, and included Padma's sister Pavarti, Hermione, Ginny, Susan Bones and Hannah Abbott, and even the Ice Queens from Slytherin Daphne Greengrass and Tracey Davies. The latter of which was just an opportunity of chance that Harry finally started taking advantage of.

Good times.

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Harry estimated, a very rough estimate because he wasn't really keeping track of the days, that he'd been going to the Ravenclaw party for about three months now. More than 90 straight days at the least, that was for sure. And while he certainly wasn't getting bored with the Ravenclaw Party... especially the After Party, he remembered wanting to see what was happening in the other

Common Rooms after he got Snape fired. Especially Hufflepuff, and most especially after he got Susan and Hannah to join in on those Ravenclaw parties!

At first he thought Susan would be his way in to the Hufflepuff Common Room, but everything he could think of to try didn't work, no matter what. Then he switched marks, and approached some of the Hufflepuff DA members that he recalled as being friendly towards him. Finally, Ernie Macmillan invited him, when he showed him the best spot to watch Snape getting dragged away from. Ernie brought along all of his roommates to join in the fun, and Harry briefly considered the option of selling tickets. Eh, next time.

As different as the Ravenclaw Party was from the Gryffindor Party, that's how different the Hufflepuff Party was from the both of them.

In modern terminology, Gryffindor parties could best be compared to High School parties, with smuggled drinks and food and with couples snogging all over the place, but never actually going all the way or anything like that. Ravenclaw parties, from what Harry had witnessed at least, were better compared with College or University parties, usually those hosted by Fraternities or Sororities. Hufflepuff, in a vast disparity, was more like what he remembered Dudley's birthday parties being like, as far as activities and party games went. The primary difference was that it was like a birthday party for everyone rather than just one person. Oh, and no presents. No prizes either for that matter, which was oddly refreshing after the highly competitive environment of Ravenclaw Tower.

The games were secondary anyway, and this is where Harry felt that Hufflepuff's were more mature than Ravensclaws and Gryffindors combined. Because the real party favor, and what was the most fun thing to do at the party was just to talk and be with your friends while making more. And to badmouth Snape, but that fell under the small talk description anyway. It was the most fun that Harry had had in a good long while. Long before Voldemort returned or even the TriWizard Tournament.

Harry vowed when he woke up the next morning to never ever do that again.

Or at the very least only do it when he absolutely needed to, because he could not stand having an experience like that become

boring, repetitive and monotonous. Hufflepuff loyally, there's nothing quite like it.

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The next night, Harry, after going through on his idea to sell tickets to the best spots in which to watch Snape getting dragged away by the Aurors, he wanted to see exactly what the Slytherins' reaction to the loss of their Head of House was. He'd already memorized the password for the year, and he knew very well where their Common Room entrance was, but it would be worse than walking into an actual snake pit if Harry Potter walked wily-nily into that place, with or without an invitation. So he went in under his Invisibility Cloak and silencing spell on his feet, following in after a couple of First Years returning from dinner. What he saw once he was through the portal genuinely stunned him.

The Slytherins were having the wildest party he'd ever seen, and that included his 'After Parties' with his girlfriend and her friends. There wasn't anything evil or any kind of Dark Arts theme, but the other houses were all very 'vanilla' and downright tame by comparison!

For starters, nobody was wearing robes or school uniforms, or anything like that, past the threshold. He'd say they were wearing muggle clothing and costumes, but his preconceptions about Slytherins would not allow him to accept that. Looking closer, he finally managed to identify the outfits as more... exotic than anything even muggles would wear.

A few of the guys were wearing togas and laurel wreaths on their heads. A couple others, here and there, appeared to be wearing kilts and other old styled clothing, but the vast majority seemed to be wearing an assortment of furs, skins, leaves and random bits of plant and/or animal life.

The girls, on the other hand, only a handful were wearing togas, including Pansy Parkinson, a couple of First Years, and one or two older years, while all the rest were in unique costumes that fit in with what almost all of the guys were wearing. In other words, an assortment of furs, skins, leaves, and random bits of plant and/or

animal life. Oh, and paint. Well, it could have just been magical coloring, but it looked like they had painted themselves too. And he should probably mention that their costumes covered less than half of what the guys' costumes covered, and most of the guys were going topless.

For the longest time, Harry just stood there, staring and looking at all the Snakes, who he honestly expected to be having a 'woe-is-us' pity party because they lost their biggest supporter on the staff. So much for House loyalty, he thought derisively.

That's about the time he noticed Malfoy was nowhere in sight. Neither were his two—oh wait, there they were. They were two of the guys in togas and were... guarding a broom closet? He had to see what this was about.

Sticking as close to the wall as was safe to do, Harry made his way across the room to where Crabbe and Goyle were guarding a door that went neither to the dorm rooms, nor exited to the school. Getting past them was as easy as it was in his second year, and the door wasn't even locked, though he really, really wished it was. Malfoy was in there all right, but he wasn't alone. And he wasn't crying or feeling miserable of the ejection of his godfather from the school. He was a bit . . . busy. But he wasn't with a girl either.

The door opened and slammed shut so fast that he was quite sure the two never even noticed. Harry quickly moved on, trying very hard not to puke while he scrubbed his brain out!

He was so busy doing that, he didn't pay attention to where he was going and bumped into the next to last two people he wanted to see down here in the dungeons.

"What the?" Tracey reached out and grabbed whatever had bumped into her, Daphne grabbing the other side. They could both feel a body wrapped in cloth, but they saw absolutely nothing. It wasn't a ghost, and invisibility cloaks, even top of the line invisibility cloaks weren't this good!

Glancing at her fellow witch, who nodded back, they both dragged their unwitting hostage down the stairs to the girls dorms, and couldn't help but hear the surprised grunt when they brought him across the threshold, down the stairs and to their room. Daphne

smirked. Their witless intruder had just revealed he was from one of the other Houses. Everyone in Slytherin knew that the girls dorms were warded in the other houses, but they hadn't been for about fifty years now in Slytherin. Anyone from Slytherin would have known that.

Grabbing hold of the cloth in their hands, both witches pushed the boy to the ground, revealing none other than Harry Potter, looking quite the boy caught with his hand in the cookie jar.

"Nice cloak, Potter," Daphne remarked.

Harry frowned and stood up, the cloak immediately wretched itself out of their hands and rested into his. "And it is mine," he said to her. "So, how is this going to play out?"

Their eyebrows, and interest went up. This wasn't the 'arrogant golden boy of Gryffindor' Snape and Malfoy had been making him out to be. This was a man who knew the games Slytherins played, and while he didn't play them himself, he still knew how to play.

"Well, well, well," Tracey drawled, stepping closer to Potter, revealing herself in the lamplight of their room more fully, "Look who went and grew up."

Harry gulped, drawing Daphne to step up beside her fellow Slytherin and even posing a bit. She knew what they looked like to a man's eyes, and side-by-side that image was only magnified. She herself was wearing a dress rather befitting her name. It was actually a specially cultivated breed of the Devil's Snare genus of magical plants. This breed was called Nymph's Vine, and like it's cousin the Devil's Snare, it wrapped itself tightly around anything and everything that it could, but not to kill it or strangle it, but to hold it tight into a pre-chosen form, in this case, a corset tight dress that supported her breasts without needing supporting straps around her neck or shoulders and that hung loose vines down to her knees. Not many though, giving flashes of her bared legs whenever she walked or stood a certain way. She'd heard rumors, shop talk and all that, of unique dresses made that wrapped themselves under the dress as much as they did up top as it were. It was all Daphne could stand just to remove her normal underwear to don this dress, something she had long ago vowed to do the moment Snape was no longer around.

Tracey, in contrast, was wearing animal skins. It was just that it seemed these skins came from a single animal, and that animal couldn't have been much larger than a squirrel. A runt squirrel at that. She was also barefoot and her hair was undone and hanging loose around her in a wild mane that only Granger could compete with. Tracey's skin was flawless, as most witches' tend to be after taking the proper potions at the proper ages, and it showed given that her scraps of skin barely covered her nipples in a single band of skins across her chest, and the ridiculously tiny panties she wore, which were little more than string holding a single triangular cut piece against her dignity, Potter had plenty to see.

He cleared his throat and swallowed noisily. "I feel I have to repeat myself, ladies," he said softly, "How is this going to play out?"

Oh, he was good. Time to see how good.

"Well, the way I see it," said Daphne as she stood closer to Tracey, the vines of her skirt actually reaching out to wrap around the other girl's thighs, and giving glimpses of what was not beneath said skirt, "This can go one of two ways. We either tell people you're here, in our room, with your wand when we have none," they both held up their empty hands, "and you hide under your Invisibility Cloak there and sneak out. Or..."

"Or, you get in-costume as it were and join us for some real party action," said Tracey. "Your choice."

Harry actually thought about it for a minute. Well not quite a minute. More like ten seconds, and then he was stripping out of his clothes and naked, and hard, six seconds later. This time it was Daphne and Tracey's turn to stare and gasp.

"What? Aren't you girls going to help me with my costume?" asked Harry with a roguish grin, his fists on his naked hips.

"Bloody Hell Potter, where the hell have you been hiding that thing!" they both screamed out.

Harry shrugged and answered, "I took a potion that my roommates swore would help me with my acne problem in Third Year. And it did, I mean it actually made my acne worse for about a week, but I

haven't had any since then. Thing is, it also kind of made... certain body parts... grow and keep growing. It finally stopped getting longer about midway through Fourth Year, but it's been getting thicker instead."

Both witches gulped again.

He really wished he understood why they all had the same reaction when he undressed like this. Well, not like this, but at his After Party in Ravenclaw Tower definitely. This was the first, and so far only time he'd come here to the Slytherin party. It took him a long time to work up the courage to tell that story, but after doing it enough times, it had become rather matter-of-fact rather than embarrassing as it was initially. He still didn't see what the big deal was.

A few minutes later, he walked out into the Slytherin Common Room without his Invisibility Cloak, but something just as good as. He was covered in dried mud, sticks, and using tree bark as a loincloth and his hair was green and his eyes solid black. Actually, he'd just been blasted with a dark brown coloring charm, lathered up in oil that Tracey had on hand, his hair had been blasted with the same, but bright green, coloring charm, and it was simplicity itself to turn his outer robes into a tree-bark loincloth. The eyes were tricky, but again one of the girls had the solution. It wasn't even a spell, just a potion that had to be applied to the eyes directly with an eyedropper. The really neat thing was that he didn't need his glasses after the potion was applied, because he could see everything!

It was indescribable, almost like he was tasting colors, hearing shapes, and he wanted to touch everything in sight! It was that amazing! Of course having two gorgeous, half-naked witches on either side of you isn't exactly an argument to not go ahead and touch things either.

"Come along... you," teased Daphne with a smile, "I want you to try this. It'll be fun."

"Oh?" asked Harry, glancing at some of the even more naked than his hostess witches running around the dungeon, "And what might that be?"

"Here," Tracey handed him a goblet. Taking a sniff and figuring they weren't trying to kill him, just get him drunk, as all he smelled was

wine. Well, that's not technically true, and a bit of a disservice to the wine itself, but he wasn't exactly an experienced connoisseur of wine tasting, and he also knew what various magical poisons smelled like, having helped brew a few for classwork, and in helping Hermione with her homework.

He took a sip and handed it to the other girl.

"Wanna come, or not?" asked Daphne, she was now standing amongst a group of nature-dressed Slytherins, all of them standing in a circle, waiting on others to help fill it out.

Harry hesitated, unsure of what he was being offered, but seeing no malicious, only mischievous intent, he made his decision and nodded, saying, "All right then. I'll come."

She smiled and held out her hand and pulled him over some invisible boundary he was only aware of after he had passed it. She kept him close as the circle closed up, leaving Tracey as the odd one out, yet keeping her in the middle for some reason.

"We're about to begin a ritual, Potter, so keep you mouth closed and do what the men do, all right?"

"What?" he hissed, surprise and shock keeping him as quiet as her words of warning. "I'm not about to...!" he tried to protest, but she shushed him.

"Shh! Keep your voice down!" she whispered. He could hear everyone else in the circle chanting something, but he was too focused on Daphne and they were speaking too softly for him to hear. He was also vaguely aware as Tracey started dancing, but again he needed to pay attention to what Daphne was telling him.

"It's not what you think," argued Daphne. "And yeah, it's not too hard to know what you're thinking, Potter." She smirked at the look on his face. "This is not a dark ritual. There's nothing evil about it. Not a touch of the Dark Arts or anything like them. This is just a magic ritual."

"Yeah, but..." he tried to argue back, but she interrupted him.

"You were part of a dark ritual before as I recall, or so you claimed at the time. Did you become a dark wizard, or infested with evil afterward?"

He frowned, about to shrug, or say that visions from Voldemort could probably count, except not many knew about them, and when he really thought about it, the visions didn't mean he was turning into Voldemort, nor was Voldemort in particular trying to corrupt him from this connection they now shared. If anything, it worked the other way around, as it gave Harry insights into Voldemort's plans and thinking and anything he might be doing at the time. A good thing to have in a war, a window into the enemy leader's head.

"I... suppose not. But what does this particular ritual do? It doesn't raise the dead or give bodies to shades, does it?" he half-joked. Tracey was still dancing, her body jerking and flowing about erotically.

She shot him a look, telling him that he wasn't being funny.

"No, nothing like that at all. We do it all the time down here. Or, well, we do when we can get away with it. Snape puts a stop to it if he ever catches us doing things like this. Probably just jealous because he can never join in. Not that anyone here would ever invite him in."

"Wait, so that's what that was about?" He pointed back to where he'd entered the circle, "You were inviting me into the ritual?"

"We call it a circle, but yeah," she answered, "One can only ever enter if they are invited, and willing."

"So," he looked around, the chanting still going on, but just as quietly and in time with Tracey's very enthusiastic dancing, "what's going on? What is this ritual about, or for? What do I do?"

At that moment, Tracey seemed to go into a fit almost, except he could still tell it was part of the same dance. All of a sudden, she threw herself down to the ground, arching her back and crawling and sliding on all fours until she came to him and went into another fit before she knelt and bowed prostrate right in front of him.

"You'll see," she giggled, "as for what it's about?" Daphne gestured as one of the boys, colored green on his skin and leaves were

strewn throughout his brown hair, stepped forward and grabbed a dagger off the altar they were all standing and chanting around. "It's a celebration of life mostly, and what it does is allow your magic to let it's... dominant side out to play for a while. Sometimes, in private rituals rather than open ones like this, it's used to finalize magical bonds or reinforce old forgotten ones. But that's not what we do here. Here..." the wizard stabbed a small slab of cooked meat at the center of the altar and picked it up, "...here, we do it in celebration of special events. Like the greasy bastard finally being out of our lives forever!"

The wizard walked up to one of the witches, one dressed in animal-themed skins and tooth and claw jewelry. He held the slab of meat out to her and she took a bite from it right off the knife, at which he recognized now. She then kissed him and pulled him down to in front of the altar, but after that Harry stopped paying attention. The trouble with it was, he really wanted to know what was supposed to happen next, but each time he tried to focus on what was happening by the altar, his attention went as far away from it as possible.

'A Notice-Me-Not charm?' He thought. 'But why?'

This happened about five more times until Harry, Tracey and Daphne were the only one left. Well, the only ones left that Harry could pay attention to. He knew the other couples were right in front of them, but he could not see or notice any of it. It was starting to get annoying.

"Now it's your turn Harry," urged Daphne, a tone of regret filling her voice as she pointed to the altar.

"Huh? Oh, right," he nodded and stepped forward. Instantly, he noticed something off with the altar, which until now had appeared unremarkable. There was something in the middle. Something... something that he needed, that needed to be taken instead of the used athame beside the dinner plate of hamburger patties. He reached into the open flame, not noticing Tracey and Daphne's gasp behind him, and pulled the something out.

It was a sword. Well... OK, a really big, double-edged knife. It was only as big as his forearm, the hilt only big enough for his hand alone. Pulling it out and looking it over, he noticed something else in the now-wildly-crackling fire at the center of the altar; a large cut

sirloin of what looked to Harry like venison. Having cooked for the Dursleys since he could stand and hold heavy pots and pans, he'd had to help Aunt Petunia prepare it a number of times, so he could recognize it by coloring of the meat and more importantly by smell. He stabbed the venison with his large dagger/small sword and turned around to face his hostesses once more.

He remembered it was Tracey that had offered him something to drink before, but it was Daphne that had taken it away. Harry didn't know exactly what to do next, but some unbidden instinct urged him to step forward and offer the food to the women. He wasn't sure when he started thinking of them in that way, but nothing could deny that they were indeed very womanly right at that moment.

He offered the venison to Tracey. She took a bite off of the edge with a smile and a hungry look of anticipation. He then offered the venison to Daphne, who looked at him with surprise, but something in his own expression must have said what she needed to hear, because she too took a bite from the meat.

The next thing that Harry was truly aware of was laying down with two witches he had been very intimate with before, more than once before, kneeling over him looking far more female and beautiful than he could recall them ever looking like from before. His loincloth had been removed, and he was definitely starting to feel the effects from that wine by now, not that it affected his 'condition' in the slightest. And two sexy, sexy witches looking at him the way they were only made it worse in all the best ways.

A fire started burning inside him. No, that wasn't right, it had always been burning, but now it threatened to consume him! He had to—to—to let it out! He had to do something! Yes! Move! But more than that, he needed to focus it, control it!

Daphne reached out with a sharp-nailed finger and drew it slowly down the front of her dress, starting at the center of her cleavage. In the wake of her finger's passing, the vines that made up and were her dress slithered and crept away from her flesh, withdrawing from her body until she reached her crevice and it fell away completely, just a bunch of weeds thrown away on the floor.

Tracey smiled that hungry, lustful smile of hers and started teasing and toying with the single band of skin around her chest, more often

just playing with her breasts and pinching and pulling the nipples that were hidden from view. She arched her back and moved one hand, slowly, tantalizingly down until she grazed the edge of her barely-there bikini bottoms, withdrawing the hand as she bent back forwards, covering the view of her body with her wild hair before flipping it back, both hands back on her breasts, covering everything Harry wanted to see. Needed to see!

He couldn't contain it anymore and it did not want to be contained!

Harry surged up and ripped the flimsy fabric from Tracey's chest and center. He grabbed her by the hair and threw her to the ground. He took Daphne by the back of the neck, kissed her deeply, possessively, and mounted her even as he pushed her to the floor on her back. It was wild, it was untamed, it was raw and animalistic!

He pushed himself into her again and again without end, folding her in half and restraining her hands above her head when she tried to move against him. He roared and filled her and kissed her one last time.

Harry turned to Tracey, who was still trying to get up, but he shoved her back down onto her face. He was behind her in an instant and mounted her like the bitch she was the instant after. She screamed, he smelled blood but didn't care. If he had, he might remember that Tracey and Daphne were virgins, but Daphne had broken her hymen at a young age during a horse riding accident. But he didn't. All he cared about was driving into her again and again, shoving her forward until her entire upper body was flat against the floor and she could only moan as he took her without end.

He didn't stop. When one tired, or when he tired of one, he would switch to the other. Eventually, when they became docile and more submissive, he allowed them to respond, but most of the time he tied or restrained one or both of them while he was busy with the other, or even while he was busy with them.

Harry finally stopped when he was released from the magic of the ritual. All the other participants had finished hours before, but no one could leave the circle until the ritual was completed, and Harry couldn't stop until the magic finally ran out, at dawn, when he passed out, and less than half an hour before time reset again.

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The morning after the Slytherin Party, Harry woke to his now usual routine of putting a refresh charm over Ron's bed, writing up the note to Snape, and while in the shower make it sound like he was being molested by the greasy git. It seemed to work even better than Snape attacking him in person. It didn't quite make sense to Harry, but he wasn't about to ask questions he did not want to know the answers to. While he was running out the door to place the note, however, he noticed both Hermione and Ginny were up and waiting for him. They even followed him all the way to the Great Hall, but went straight to the Gryffindor table and watched him as he placed the note rather than do anything else.

It concerned him, until he noticed a number of people had actually been watching him and were watching him still, including Cho, all her friends, Susan and Hannah, and the Sexy, Sexy Witches from Slytherin. Shrugging it off, he went on with his day going to sit down at his usual spot, only to look up and found all those girls that had been staring at him were now sitting all around him, and still staring. He looked to Hermione and asked, "Hey, Hermione, why is everybody staring at me like that? Did I do something different?"

"Huh? Oh! Uh, no, no you did nothing wrong at all Harry. Would you like me to help you study later on Harry?" she asked with an unusual gleam in her eye.

"Uh..."

"Here, let me butter your bread for you Harry," Ginny immediately offered, being so bold as to grab it from his hands.

"Let me pour you some more juice, Harry," Cho immediately got up and proceeded to do so.

"No, let me Harry!"

"No, let me!"

"Girls!" he snapped, his patience at an end with the unfamiliar fiasco, not that he wasn't flattered, but he had more experience with

'different stuff' being a sign of bad stuff happening, not yet having gotten so bored in his life that anything different or new was a good thing. Not to mention seeing all of his conquests together like this—

Wait a minute...

All of his conquests? He did a quick headcount and had to admit the truth. This was all of them. And they were all looking at him the same way, like he was some kind of celebrity superstar. Or the man that had taken their virginities and made each and every one of them his slave by right of the Ultimate Dare. Hold on... the ritual last night! He remembered wondering if there were going to be any consequences to participating in that, and well now he—

Hold on here! That was last night! As in tonight, because time reset itself. His participation in that ritual was effectively erased from history, there should be no consequences! He needed some answers, and those he usually went to were out of the castle, or completely untrustworthy. Except... except maybe one.

"Girls, come with me," he ordered and immediately got up and lead them all to the Hospital Wing. The scary part? They actually followed him, and none of them said a word or did a thing to contradict him.

When they arrived, Madam Pomphrey was actually fussing over a bedridden Professor McGonagall, still unconscious and looking frightfully pale. She looked up at the commotion of Harry and his entourage entering the ward, having obviously been expecting someone else, she was more than a bit stunned at the number of students entering her domain, willingly that is.

"Potter? What is the meaning of this?" she asked, sounding cross, though there were signs of concern in her eyes.

"Actually, that's what I'm here to speak with you about Madam Pomphrey. I don't know exactly what has happened! I woke up like I do normally, but when I came down to breakfast today," he gestured to the group around him, "all these girls suddenly started waiting on me hand and foot, and I have no idea what is going on. I was hoping you could take a look at them, me, us, take a look at us and see what you could find. If you're not too busy that is..." he looked over at his frail Head of House.

"Er, how is she?" he asked, feeling guilty for not trying to see her before now.

"She's being transferred to Saint Mungo's soon, they'll be able to do more for her than I can," admitted the School Nurse. "Now then, let's see what we have here. All of you, take a bed."

None of them moved, all eyes only on Harry.

"Each of you to a bed. Now," he ordered, and they moved instantly.

Madam Pomphrey shared a look with the overwhelmed Boy Who Lived and nodded her head, "I see what you mean. Let's begin, shall we?" She then proceeded to examine, just with her wand, each girl individually. She started shooting Harry curious looks by the second girl they examined, which evolved into disgusted glares by the time they'd finished. "What have you done Potter?" she snarled at him.

"That's what I want to know!" he shouted out innocently, holding his hands up. "What? WHAT?"

"Each and every one of these girls has a magical link to you. A submissive magical link. I'd dare call it a slave bond, but I've never seen one before, so I cannot be certain. The link, however, that I am certain of, and it's not exactly a new connection either. Showing at least several months of existing in some!"

Harry blinked, then looked at all of them in turn, asking out loud, "But, how is that possible?"

"It shouldn't be!" the nurse exclaimed. "I personally examined Miss Chang, recently as well as a number of these young women for injuries sustained during that... during the dismissal of that club of yours. None of them showed any signs of these magical links then, but these links are showing they've been in place a great deal longer than my last examination of them. The only explanation I can fathom is use of the Dark Arts, forcing a bond on these young witches!"

Harry stared, stunned, and then his eyes rolled up in his head as he fainted. He was briefly aware of being in the Department of Mysteries and seeing Sirius, but being even that aware reminded him of the results of Madam Pomphrey's examination, and the vision stopped itself prematurely, only to resume with each and every one

of his girls being held and tortured by all the Death Eaters he'd ever seen the face of, with himself as Voldemort. Harry immediately employed his Occlumency skills, imagining the girls having the skills he'd learned and taught in the DA, only for them to be beat back down almost immediately. He felt rage. He felt guilt. He felt misery. And then his mind shut down.

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Harry didn't bother with the note today, he went straight to Madam Pomphrey and asked her to examine him, focusing on magical links. She showed grave concern when she found several, a good deal many more than anyone could normally support, she'd told him. He begged and questioned her on how to break the links, and she freely admitted that she did not know enough to properly break all the links, especially the one coming from his scar, but the rest of them, she could offer some advice, such as staying away from the people that held the other end of the links. If it was a naturally formed connection, distance should sever it with time.

Harry frowned and made a decision he knew he would regret.

"Madam Pomphrey... what if... What if these links weren't all entirely... natural, or accidental?" he put forth.

She frowned, but then answered that her earlier suggestion would have no affect on it at all, and that the only way then was to intentionally break the links. The sooner, the better as the longer the links were allowed to form, the more difficult they would be in actually breaking. He then told her, without telling her everything, about the ritual and that all it had done was 'activate' the links, which shouldn't have been active in the first place. She glared at him, then huffed and pulled him over to a room of the Hospital Wing he'd never been in before. She then had him stand at a very specific point in the room and went about lighting numerous candles and three pots of incense. She then tapped the floor with her wand and the whole room lit up with circles, lines and magical sigils and runes he did not recognize at all.

"Madam Pomphrey?" Harry called out, scared.

"Not to worry Potter, this sort of thing, unfortunately, happens more often than many would like to admit. I'm just grateful you've never had to set foot in this place until now. It's a purification ritual chamber, and its sole purpose is to remove or reject unwanted and harmful bonds that were unwillingly activated by other magical rituals. Every Slytherin for every year has been in here at least once. See this," she pointed to a towering column of light directly across from the circle Harry stood in, it had a number of rings all around it, which glowed different colors and at lower intensity, the top one was solid black, the bottom an even gray. "This represents the number of magical links you've unwillingly opened yourself to by participating in that ritual, Potter. I count seventeen! It's going to take that many hours for just one of them to disappear! Not counting that one in black, or the bottom gray one here! And then it'll take the same number of hours minus one for the next one to disappear! Shame, but you're going to have to reschedule your OWL exam for a much later date, as these links could be viewed as a form of cheating. I'll inform the examiners. Do not move from that spot Potter!"

Harry looked up and counted the number of rings on the column of light. "Oh boy."

It was more than that, he realized. It was going to take him four days to get to a point at which he could actually get more than one bond erased per day! And then it would be several more days before he could do the rest in a single day. A week, he calculated morosely. A week of doing nothing but standing here until he woke up, just to come back here, have that incredibly embarrassing and compromising conversation with Madam Pomphrey, and do nothing but stand here waiting for the rings to disappear!

...

Oh well, at least he had time to practice his Occlumency, he sighed, closed his eyes and proceeded to do just that.

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A week of doing nothing but standing in a circle leaves one with a lot of time to think. A LOT of time to think!

Harry had decided to add another rule to his 'Rules of the Time Loop', beyond the Big Five plus the sixth rule. This new rule would actually be the Prime Rule, as far as he cared, and superseded all the others. That rule, simply put, was; The Rules of Magic Still Apply!

It was the only thing that made sense really when you thought about it, and he had thought about it!

The Ultimate Dare was a variation of the Unbreakable Vow, and he'd invoked that on all of the girls that Madam Pomphrey showed he had a magical link to. But they didn't show signs of the bond that losing the Ultimate Dare to him was supposed to create. Not until he mixed it with a ritual that established him as a magical dominant. The more he thought about it, the more Harry was sure it had something to do with the actual ritual than the temporary links he'd had through those poker games. Also... even when they were his slaves under the Ultimate Dare, they had never treated him like they had after that damn ritual. So it all came back to the ritual. The links were temporary and would remain temporary, no matter how many times they were created or recreated. But a ritual, a ritual is designed to bring about greater magic than any one witch or wizard could ever call forth on their own. A ritual, he remembered as much from his reading and studying for the DA, was one of several ways wizards used to make a temporary spell, or otherwise impossible to maintain effect, fully permanent.

There was more to it than that, a whole lot more, but it was also the revelation Harry had come to, standing in the ritual purification chamber of the Hospital Wing for a full week. Physical and mental changes were affected by the resets, no matter the change, even death could be undone by a reset. Magical changes however, those were permanent. A change to a person's magical core, or magical bonds or even a magical oath would still be bound by the Rules of Magic, even after a reset.

Unfortunately, Harry wasn't knowledgeable enough to say what all did or did not constitute a change to magic, but it made him all the more conscious and aware of how reckless he'd been behaving recently. In normal circumstances, he'd be a father 15 times over for crying out loud! And seeing Professor McGonagall like that had reminded him, painfully so, of what he'd been ignoring day after day. He shouldn't be resting on his laurels, having a good time and being

a reckless teenager! He had a responsibility! He was the only one that could defeat Voldemort! He was the only one that could save the Wizarding World! And here he was, wasting all his time going to parties every day and having sex with girls and shirking his responsibility!

Well it was time that stopped. The moment he was cleaned of the last magical connection to the girls, he was going to start training like never before. He'd done it once and then got too distracted by figuring out how to get enough people involved in the fighting and then with figuring out the rules to the resets to bother with it again. It was well past time he started working on improving himself and making it so he was the only person needed to go to the Department of Mysteries to defeat Voldemort and all of his Death Eaters!

It was time to train!

Author's Notes (continued...): As I'm sure some of you have already noticed, I updated the other day with corrected versions of the previous chapters of this story. After a great many errors had been pointed out to me, and that wasn't even all that I found when I went back to edit my own work. As such, it has come to my attention that it divides my focus in a negative way to simultaneously attempt to both write and edit my own work, at least as far as this one story is concerned. Therefore, I am offering, for those that want it, the responsibility of assisting me in editing, checking for grammar and spelling errors as well as making this story even better by offering useful suggestions and ideas on a chapter-by-chapter basis. Basically I'm asking; Who Wants To Be My Editor? Please reply via E-MAIL only at (the . evil . guy grandt . Com)

Also, please be VERY aware of my peculiarities, as I do not update or write at a regular or consistent basis, and there may be points at which, even after months long interval between updates, I'll e-mail the next chapter and all but demand a completed edit before the next day. I may even send you an incomplete chapter and "ask your opinion" or even "ask for help", all but begging you to write in just one scene to help get my juices flowing again. If you believe and are confident you can handle such peculiarities, and perhaps may even enjoy them a bit, by all means apply by e-mail. I'll send you previews/incomplete scenes of the next chapter as a 'test' of sorts. Trial by editing as it were. Either way, an editor will help me in getting these updates done sooner and probably faster. Also it'll cut

way down on the typos that interrupt the flow of reading, which even I hate.

Hope to hear from you, and again, please only apply by e-mail and only if you are confident and sure you want to do this!

Chapter 5

Harry started training the moment he woke up the next morning. Only to be blocked at every turn as everyone wondered what he was doing, or because they hated him and thought what he was doing was suspicious, or because they thought he was training wrong. It took him over five resets to finally get the point that he couldn't just 'train' and not have people wonder what the heck was going on with him, whether they were his friends and curious as to why he was doing it, or if they were enemies (of one form or another) and suspecting him of either being up to mischief, or even starting the DA back up.

He needed isolation, he decided after the fifth day straight that Hermione drug him, quite unwillingly, to take the OWL exam, right when he'd been in the middle of reading through a 7th Year's Defense Text from two years ago. He needed someone or something that would help him train and not ask questions while doing it. And there was not a wizard he knew that would willingly allow anything like that. Certainly none that he wanted to learn from in the first place.

Recalling that day he went to the Room of Requirement and how nobody found him until he actually walked out at the end of the day, he decided to give that a try. So the next reset, before any of his roommates had even stirred, Harry was up, dressed and down the stairs, heading out the Gryffindor Tower portal and down the hallways to the Room of Requirement, where he paced three times back and forth, focusing on what he needed, a place to work and train himself to be the best wizard he could be, without interference. Moments later, the door opened and shut behind him, and he found himself in a Hogwarts classroom, only with a single chair and desk situated in front of a magic blackboard, which wrote out instructions for him to start reading the books. There were over a hundred books piled up underneath the blackboard, old copies and every variation of every school book ever employed at Hogwarts.

The instructions called for him to start with the first book on the left and to work his way down and across. The entire first stack, which went 20 or more deep, was every variation since Hogwarts founding of the Standard Book of Spells. Realizing that, while not exactly what he had in mind, it was definitely what he required, Harry grabbed the first book, sat down at the desk and started reading. A

month later, over 30 resets in other words, Harry finally finished the first stack and moved onto the second, which was every text, save for Lockhart's fiction, ever used for every year of Defense Against The Dark Arts. Despite being his best subject, it still took him over three months (almost a hundred resets) to get through them all.

The image of Professor McGonagall lying there, pale and moments from being shipped to St. Mungo's haunted Harry. It took the place of the halls of the Department of Mysteries, as well as battles recently fought in his nightmares. Anytime he felt himself getting bored or on the verge of burning out, he practiced his Occlumency instead and kept on reading and studying. Though he was not practicing, his book-learning was soaring through the proverbial roof and things that he had 'understood' but 'couldn't explain or talk about' he now truly understood and felt he could even hold a conversation with Hermione over. Still, he kept reading, and kept learning.

It took him over ten "months" of resets to actually get through all of those books. He learned speed reading and the most basic of memory techniques through sheer stubbornness and necessity. He hadn't memorized the books, and the room did not give him or grade him on what he read, it just provided him with what he required, the material necessary to become the best wizard he could be. What he did with that, Hogwarts could not force him to do anything, but he did the best he could with it. He really wished that he could ask Hermione for help, but she was so focused on the OWLs that afternoon that without some kind of slave bond, he sincerely doubted he could get her to help him out in this. That was something else he felt guilt over.

After Harry finished with all the books, the very next reset, when he walked into the Room of Requirement, he was faced with what looked to be the practical test for every OWL or school exam that Hogwarts had ever witnessed and instructions for each of the exercises. There was also a clock in the middle of the room that started ticking every time Harry started an exercise, and stopped the moment he did anything else. For the next six months, every time Harry went to the Room of Requirement, he was met with this scene, and he spent the whole day, from walking in, to going to sleep just eight hours before 7 the next morning, doing all of those tests and exercises, getting faster times every day.

After six months, however, something changed. When he woke up and raced down the hall to the Room of Requirement, paced in front of the bare wall while focusing on his training to be a better wizard, the door appeared and he walked inside... to an empty room. A very large empty room, but still an empty room. He had gotten rather used to his desk and reading books. He didn't even know what to do with an empty room the size of the Black Lake itself!

Suddenly the stones on the floor shifted and he was looking at a running track, much like he'd seen on TV for the Summer Olympics. The Dursleys might have been terrible people but they were as patriotic as they came, and it was one of the few times they let him watch TV outside his cupboard. Harry suddenly knew what was being 'required' of him and he couldn't believe it for a minute. During which a number of exercise weights and jump ropes and other physical exercise equipment appeared here and there around the track. Harry gulped, stripped off his robes so he was just in trousers and his t-shirt, and began to run around the track. Markers appeared, letting Harry know how far he ran, and a clock appeared on the wall, letting him keep track of how fast he was going.

After he collapsed from running, the jump ropes appeared right under his nose and he took the hint and started jumping rope for the better part of half an hour. When he couldn't even move after that, he moved on to the weight machines, one after the other. He collapsed shortly before noon, his whole body one big sore. The elves, somehow knew he was in there rather than the Great Hall and delivered his lunch on time, as they did every day in fact. After lunch, the track disappeared and targets much like what the DA used appeared. Thankfully the scoring was done much the same, with only Stupefy or other disabling charms actually getting the targets to 'go down' and stay down. At least it was at first.

When he woke up the next Reset, he was surprised at how much he didn't hurt, and was mortified at having to do physical exercise the moment he walked into the Room again. He was further depressed when he saw no improvement in his times or distance that he could cover before collapsing. After lunch, he was at least satisfied that his aim and the power behind his spells had improved. A solid week of resets later though so absolutely no improvement, or change at all really, in his physical development. His spell accuracy and power had improved, but he still ran the same distance at the same speed before collapsing of exhaustion.

That was when he remembered the Prime Rule, nothing changed... except for magic. And unfortunately that included his physical form. Which meant that he could exercise the whole day, every day, and he would never get a bit of benefit from it. Yeah, he woke up not hurting or sore or anything, but he never got the muscle or strength and speed that he should have gotten from it either! This sucked!

Harry actually considered stopping all this training and goofing off and doing whatever he wanted... except the image of Professor McGonagall flashed in front of his mind's eye, as well as that last, terrible battle at the Department of Mysteries, where all of his friends in the DA died because of him. He had to get better and stronger and more powerful... he just couldn't do it through physical strength unfortunately. Which was a shame as he remembered from all his reading that the stronger the wizard or witch, the more powerful their magic. But...

But he also remembered there were other ways of increasing one's magic that did not include increasing how much magical power one had access to.

The next reset, Harry focused on the type of training he wanted to do, and he was not disappointed. The Room was it's normal size, no running track this time, but in addition to the Death Eater targets, there were also other obstacles and magical exercises he could try. Also, the magical black board was back, filled with instructions on each exercise.

To begin with, the targets would no longer go down unless the spell he cast had been cast silently. And then for the other exercises, as an example, he was to cast a Leviosa spell, didn't matter what variant, and make the object float through various kinds of obstacle courses. The first few times, he was allowed to cast saying the spell and waving the wand as he had the first time he'd learned the spell. After he managed to navigate the object through the courses without error and was doing the consistently, he felt he'd improved and the very next day was challenged to cast the same spell without saying or mouthing the words at all. It took him more than a dozen tries each time and three days before he was able to cast it with any amount of competency that way. Once he could, he started the same obstacle courses as before, but with the spell cast silently. After he came to the same results as the first time, he was

challenged to do it without moving his wand beyond pointing it at the object. Harry boggled at the exercise, having never come across the like, and found it more difficult than he had expected, but he persevered until he ultimately succeeded, both with the obstacle courses and with the moving targets.

Another exercise was designed to test and improve his accuracy. Several Snitch-like balls, with wings but colored gray like the stone walls flew around until he succeeded in hitting them with a single shot from any kind of attack spell. The faster he got them, the faster they went the next round. If he got all of them inside a single minute, their number doubled next round. And then the darn things started 'firing back' as it were, divebombing him, or running interference for each other, making him miss all of them right when he'd had one dead to rights.

Then there were the last two that nearly killed him, literally. Instead of Snitch-like flying balls, old Bludgers (that's what they were) were unleashed and wouldn't be stopped unless he went full power on either Stunning or Disarming spells. He could be as fast as the Snitch-like targets or faster, but it didn't make a difference if the power behind the spell wasn't enough to stop the target. And finally there was the ultimate test, where he had to put it all together; control, accuracy, speed, and strength. Harry was made to stand in a single spot while several targets appeared all around him, most behind obstacles to his line-of-sight, and he had to learn how to... bend his spells around objects and still fire them with sufficient strength. The secret, he finally figured out when faced with a Dementor-shaped target, was the intent behind the spell. If he focused that intent of what he wanted the target to be, the spell... bolt (for lack of a better term) would instantly home in on that target, regardless of barriers. Or inspite of them rather.

Soon enough, Harry was Silent and Still Casting every spell he used, was dodging and blasting over a hundred fifty Snitch and Bludger targets, could navigate anything from a feather to an iron ring that weighed as much as a bowling ball through a three-dimensional maze in under a minute, and he could hit anything in any direction from any direction! And it only took him four solid months of never-ending training and magic use.

At one point, after witnessing how far he had come, he started to wonder if there were any more exercises he could perform that

would actually make a difference. That very reset, the blackboard had three additional magical exercises for him to perform in addition to what he was already doing. He had to lift a tiny pin and while keeping it aloft, simultaneously levitate a piece of thread through the eye of the needle. Then he had to cast and maintain a Protego charm (any variant) and then cast another spell of any kind. He also had to conjure an object, which he had read about and only now got practical experience on doing, and then cast another spell on it. It was also noted that he was allowed to cast "like a first year" for these exercises. At first.

He felt like he was trying to use magic cross-eyed for a while, and only the memory of seeing Dumbledore, Moody, and even Remus and other adult wizards cast multiple spells simultaneously that kept him at it. At first it was like trying to write with both hands at the same time, difficult but certainly not impossible, and then after a bit more work it was like dodging bludgers, watching the Chasers, and hunting the Snitch in Quidditch, merely a matter of deciding on where to put his focus and dividing his attention appropriately. And then things got even more complicated.

Harry was already running a near daily triathlon even, only with six events instead of just three, but the Room's next exercise pushed him over the magical edge as it were. He was to cast an Impedimenta at a giant rolling ball that came straight out of the wall at him and keep it up as a constant stream rather than just a single blast of energy. The first time, he'd only barely managed to dodge and watched as the giant rolling ball went into a hole in the opposite wall from where it came, only to come right back out of the first hole a minute later. The magic black board was quite clear about what Harry was supposed to do in this instance. The first time he actually tried to do the exercise, he woke up after a reset a minute into it and resolved to get it right. It took him the better part of a week, a short week, to actually get the hang of it and succeed in halting the progression of the rolling death, only to discover that the moment he either weakened in his casting or let it go, the ball would keep on rolling, no matter what. It got to the point that soon it was the only exercise Harry was doing most days, and his day only ended when he failed to stop the rolling death. Until the day finally came that he stopped it... and kept it stopped until he reset at 7 AM the next day.

The morning he woke up from that, Harry was exhausted and when he caught his reflection on the way to the Room of Requirement, he

noticed that his skin was paler than normal and even had a grayish-green tint to it. Harry found a potion waiting for him the moment he stepped into the Room. Seeing nothing wrong with it, he gulped it all down and was amazed at how much better he felt. He then was presented with a few books, which he read for the next hour or so. The books were actually Healer guides, all three of them about the dangers of Magical Exhaustion, as well as their symptoms and treatments.

Harry noted that the potion he'd drunk had in fact been the common treatment for Magical Exhaustion, a "magical" version of the Pepper-Up potion. Not a replacement for genuine rest and food, but enough to keep a wizard casting magic for the next little while, restoring up to half of the wizard's reserves per bottle. Seeing that there was only one bottle, Harry decided not to test his strength against the giant rolling death ball today, and instead focused entirely on his other magical exercises. The day after that though, he was back to barely holding back the rolling death all day until he collapsed from exhaustion.

That was just one more piece of evidence in Harry's mind that reinforced the Prime Rule. Unlike when he was physically exercising, waking up without any sign of the work already done, his magic was being constantly and daily drained in these exercises, and he felt it the moment he woke up each morning. His magic actually started to hurt from the number of times he'd pushed himself to the breaking point and beyond. One the days that he'd really pushed it, he didn't allow himself to do any magic at all, instead just reading all those textbooks he'd already read through, reminding himself of some facts, and learning new things all the time.

During this learning, he wondered why it was he didn't just use other spells or even transfiguration to get past the rolling death, until he noticed one day that the iron ring he was navigating through the maze was about ten times heavier than when he'd started and he didn't even notice the difference, magically speaking. He remembered having to strain to successfully lift one of those rings before, and that he'd had to shove about a quarter of his magic to do so at one point. Now he was barely using a fraction, as in a one/one hundredth, if not a one/one thousandth!

While the amount of his magic did not, yet, seem to be increasing, the potency, the raw strength of it was definitely going up thanks to the rolling death.

Unfortunately, in his reading between rounds with the rolling death, he came across plenty of material about what it was exactly that he courted with every time he pushed himself to the brink like that. The potion that Hogwarts gave to him after he came in nearly depleted of all magic was meant to be a temporary, rarely ever used band-aid to the problem, with rest and plenty of exercise being the long term cure. The healthier the body, the healthier the magic, and a weak body cannot, long, support strong magic.

The stronger his magic got, the more he risked some kind of... surge of accidental magic incidents, and from there he was a fifty-fifty chance of either becoming a squib, having magic that he could not use, or literally blowing himself up from his body being unable to contain the magic he wielded. Those were the long term consequences.

The short term was that if he kept taking the potion every time, there was a chance his magic would come to rely on it, as a kind of drug addiction. The physical consequences of taking too much of that potion were fairly obvious and apparent after only three drinks of it, but as Harry had discovered the hard way, physical changes get wiped clean with every reset. Magical changes on the other hand...

So, Harry stopped taking the potion, instead letting his magic come back on its own. It lengthened the amount of time he was stuck reading books instead of practicing magic, but he felt it was healthier for him in the long run. It also allowed him to discover that the Room of Requirement had a lot more books saved up than just old text books. A lot of the books seemed to be fictional writing, teen trashy romance novels or old muggle books here and there, but there were also lost tomes and magic books that contained things Harry had never even guessed at.

The other thing that Harry worked on, just as much as his magic, was his Occlumency. Some days he would test his will against Voldemorts, others he would meditate for hours. It made little difference, especially when Voldemort fought back, but every little bit helped. When he finally succeeded in driving Voldemort from his thoughts before the vision was finished, Harry felt justified in finally

calling himself a true Occlumens. A pathetically weak one, but an Occlumens nonetheless.

DOM_____

____DOM

Harry woke up the moment of the reset, immediately donning his Invisibility Cloak, and was out the tower and down the hall to the Room of Requirement before anyone else in his dorm had even moved (or farted). Once inside, outside the castle and down by the Owlery, Harry's pet owl Hedwig took off from there, only to return a few moments later and hand a letter to one of her compatriots there and have him deliver the letter she held to the Great Hall at breakfast, only to leave herself a second after that and return to the hidden 'required' owl-entrance to the Room of Requirement.

A few hours later, a school-wide search for Harry Potter had been completed and one Severus Snape was dragged out, being kicked and screamed at the whole way, and everyone demanding to know what he had done to the Boy Who Lived and where the body was. By that afternoon, the entire Wizarding World knew that Snape had killed and hidden away the body of Harry Potter. Even Voldemort knew it.

Of course Harry wasn't actually dead, and Snape hadn't done anything to him (recently). Instead, Harry was sequestered away in the Room of Requirement and spent the entire day training. He had been doing things this way for... gosh, he'd lost track at some point.

Thus he 'required' a calendar of how many days he'd been repeating and thus appeared a scratch mark calendar, with four straight lines and a fifth cutting diagonally through them. There were, when he counted, one hundred and eighty sets of marks, exactly. Multiplied by five that was nine hundred days. The average month was thirty days, give or take one or two days for certain months. Divide nine hundred by thirty, well that equals thirty. Thirty months in total. Divided by twelve, that's roughly two and a half years. Three of those months he'd spent doing nothing but partying. Three weeks, the first few as he regarded them, he'd been fighting and dealing with figuring out the time loop, and then that last week had been spent standing in the ritual purification ward of the Hospital Wing before he began seriously training. So three, almost four months

from two and a half years, or thirty months in the end equals two years two months and an extra week.

He'd been doing things this way for two years now. In other words, Harry had completed his Hogwarts education. Self-taught education past Fifth Year OWLs, but it was two years with no vacation or weekends or time off. Harry had been working and working non stop at making himself a better wizard. He'd 'required' the remaining education that he was supposed to be getting from Hogwarts anyway, and that is exactly what he got too. The classroom, like any other in the castle always appeared, with only a single desk and a magic chalkboard that filled with information for him to memorize. There was no paper or quills, they would do him no good. The first lesson "Hogwarts", as he liked to think of it, had instilled in him, through daily exercises that he did so his memory was markedly improved from what it had been not too long ago, was the only knowledge you could ever be sure about was what you knew for yourself.

So while he didn't quite have Hermione's level of mental recall, and neither did he suddenly develop an eidetic (photographic) memory, he was retaining and recalling all of the information he was learning that much better than before all the same. For example, one of the things he learned in his sequestered learning here was that there were two areas in which school children are not taught, but people like Voldemort and Dumbledore are well known and even better respected for. They were Magical Power and Magical Control.

Magical Power is kind of obvious in what it means. In ways the common wizard understands such things, wizards and witches have magical power, squibs and muggles do not have magical power. Harry had long since learned that it was a great deal more complicated than that. Some people, wizards and witches for example, have a greater amount of magical power at their disposal, whereas squibs and muggles either have none, or not enough to make a difference. In wizards and witches, however, there are further levels of separation. Those with low magical power cannot cast spells or perform magic that requires a great deal of magical power, and when they try, they tire easily and suffer, quite frequently, from magical exhaustion, a state in which the term 'green around the gills' has never been more literal. There are as many middle levels as there are wizards and witches alive in the world, but still a risk of magical exhaustion if they try to do too much too quickly. And then

there are the few. The ones compared to Merlin more often than not. Those with so much magical power they have never and very likely never will suffer from magical exhaustion a day in their entire lives. The wizards that were once considered gods to the Ancient Greeks and Romans wielded such power and when compared to their fellow wizards and witches, the term gods was not far off.

Magical Control, on the other hand, while meaning exactly what it sounds like, is not something that enters into casual conversation, even in the Wizarding World. The modern day wizard and witch controls their magic through the use of a wand. A thousand years ago, they controlled it through ritual and any focus they could get their hands on. A thousand years before that, 'gods' wielded magic like birds flew and fish swam and had done it for centuries by that time. And supposedly there had been a time even before that where Dark Wizards ruled humanity with an iron fist and called themselves "titans" and had done so since before recorded history. The difference was the level of control they held over how they used their magic. Wands, Harry realized during his factual education, were a crutch. A crutch wizards had been using for a millennium and had become such a staple of their existence as wizards that they didn't even realize it was a crutch anymore!

The difference between the magical control employed in each era was staggering to the young boy's mind, as well as what was "said" to have been "common" during the time of the "Greek Wizards". How much control did they have over magic, and how did they attain it in the first place?

Hogwarts, unfortunately, could not give him the answers to those questions because Hogwarts had not been built until the era of the wand, as Harry, and one other ambiguous historian called it. Or rather at the beginning of the era of the wand. Still, there was more to go on than just rumors.

As historical fact, there were recorded instances of 'wandless' magic being performed by those with high magical power. It was also proven fact that "only a great deal of focus" could be used by those of equal power to replicate such feats. It was what led to the modernization of Apparition, the Animagus transformation, and a number of 'wandless spells' that only those given the title 'Grand Sorcerer' were said to have demonstrated, such as the candle

lighting spell Professor Dumbledore had demonstrated a few years before as well as a few other things.

Another 'wandless' magical skill that Harry was aware of was Occlumency, the magical defense of the mind. And of course it's counterpart, Legilimency, the magical ability to 'read' other people's minds. While there was a wand-cast spell, 'Legilimens', Harry had seen Snape use it on him with his wand nowhere in hand, and it was also said that Voldemort only had to look at you to know if you were lying or hiding something or even just to know what your secrets were. Snape made it sound like Legilimency, and he was inclined to agree. Furthermore, he never heard the magic word prior to his visions with Voldemort, so he sincerely doubted that the Dark Lord had to say them to use the power.

Unfortunately, Harry had enough trouble with Occlumency that he felt he had no hope with Legilimency. Yet, at least. His days consisted largely of exercises in magical control, in particularly casting silently.

During the exercises, when he was showing success, he realized he was practically shouting inside his own head and that likewise made him realize that would make him vulnerable to Legilimency users, in other words the same people he was fighting against on a regular basis now. The same day he had this realization, after he finished with the exercises, three books were laid out on the desk before him. One was entirely in Latin, one was in Ye Olde Engliche, and the last was entitled "Occluding the Mind: Protecting Secrets No One Knows You Know" by Professor X. Well, actually the name after the word Professor had just been crossed out with a big black X everywhere in the book, but it made an odd kind of sense to the muggle-raised young wizard. Starting with that, he discovered that he hadn't been too far off with his 'imaginary defense' whenever Voldemort's vision typically overcame him, but it was actually just step one.

Then one day, he had an odd thought while working on his Occlumency. It had actually been bugging him for quite a while, but in all those old stories about ancient and powerful wizards, and not just the Ancient Greek and Roman ones, there was the occasional story about how they turned into all sorts of animals, not just one. And then there was teleporting, or Apparition as it was called today. They appeared and disappeared and half-vanished or half-appeared

before totally vanishing or totally appearing without a sound. And another wandless skill he'd heard about in his reading was certain elemental spells, like the Incendio or Aguamenti charms, but where people could control the very elements themselves wandlessly and hardly with any effort at all. Where had all these skills gone, and why was it so impressive to do something that used to be so common place?

To his surprise, he found the answers to those questions in the history books Hogwarts was giving him to read. The books didn't explain how such abilities worked, but they answered the question on why they were no longer common place, and where they had gone in regards to the modern witch and wizard.

The reason wandless abilities were so common in the past, quite simply, can be laid at the feet of the fact that until one thousand years ago, there were no wands. If a wizard or witch could use magic at all, they either had to find some other focus, or do it all on their own. And until the Roman Empire, there were magical people all over the place, and the 'feats of gods' were commonplace and recognized by all societies throughout the world. What happened with the Romans was actually fairly obvious after the fact. They had their own 'gods', their own magic users who were probably a lot like Voldemort and his Death Eaters, ones that made muggles, non-magical people, hate and fear magic users at large. Thus forcing magic users and magic itself into hiding.

And with no one to teach the new generation how to use their powers, the knowledge of wandless magic, elemental powers, and teleporting everywhere faded into the shadows of history.

Until Hogwarts came along. And with it, the wand.

Harry recalled that Mr. Ollivander's shop had a sign on it that said, "Makers of Fine Wands since 382 B.C.," and given that was probably around the time, not the exact date certainly, but around the time that the Roman Empire started spreading its borders, he felt he could guess at the history behind that as well.

Most likely, and just that most likely, not definitely, but most likely the Ollivander family were either born in, or conquered by the Romans and an ambitious son probably started a business, creating unique (at the time) magical foci for other Roman magic users to use. After

all, before that point, you either had focus through training, or you went out and found yourself a charm or talisman or mystic jewel or even an ancient staff to use to cast spells through. A lot of hard work.

And then comes an innovator that binds a stick with the remains of various magical animals and depending on what way you wave it, or what words you say, a magic spell of decent power was released. Likewise, Harry had no trouble believing that the Ollivander family truly has been making their wands since that time. It's just they didn't bother selling them until the time of Hogwarts, when there was a place for magical people to safely gather and learn how to use their magic and how to use those wands the Ollivanders sold.

So, except for the exceedingly few, since that time, wands, which really only should have been a stepping stone to full control over one's magic, remained the crutch of the Wizarding World ever since. On top of that, those exceedingly few were the ones like Merlin, Morgana, Dumbledore, and Voldemort, magic users with so much magical power that they didn't need wands after a certain point, and only used them as a way to further boost their power. Harry had no doubt in his mind that if Dumbledore lay down his wand and never touched it again, he could easily use magic the same way any ordinary wizard or witch did with their wand. But at a fraction of the power he normally wielded said magic of course.

And then there was the elemental magic. In ancient times, there were wizards (titans and gods) that mastered a single element to such a degree that everyone in the world created whole religions around them being the source of the element in the world. Zeus, for example, undoubtedly mastered the powers of Air, Sky and Wind. More than likely, at several points he conjured thunderstorms and used lightning quite often for him to be known by the lightning bolt even to this day. Poseidon, god of the seas and the waves, likewise mastered the power of Water, Waves, and Sea. And there were plenty of others too!

Harry couldn't find much about how these magic-users were able to use elemental magic so well, but he was curious to see if there was anything he could do to attain his own elemental mastery. The history books also spoke of certain individuals that actually mastered more than one element, and some even all four primary elements. Not just the ancient gods and titans either, but wizards and witches

with real names, some even in recent history, and at least one still alive today.

Nicholas Flamel, forger of the Philosopher's Stone, is said to have mastered all four primary elements, and that's how he became able to forge the Stone in the first place. It was mostly all theory, but the facts of it were that in his prime (roughly six hundred years ago) he was seen wielding earth, fire, water, and wind magic all at once, and individually on hundreds of occasions.

Merlin and Morgana as well as dozens of other throughout the years, a couple Harry even recognized from his normal History of Magic classes. One name that really stuck out though, was the name Albus Dumbledore. He was listed as only having displayed a mastery of fire magic, but it still caught his attention. And it fit, Harry realized after thinking about it.

Dumbledore had a phoenix as a familiar. He wandlessly and silently extinguished and lit all the candles in the Great Hall on several occasions. He'd seen the man battle Voldemort in the Department of Mysteries a number of times now, and one of the spells he used was a wall of fire to dispell that giant water ball that Voldemort threw at him whenever they were at the Fountain. Speaking of which, why would the Dark Lord use a giant ball of water instead of... oh. That was oddly symmetrical, Harry thought. The Headmaster, Leader of the Light, organizer of the Order of the Phoenix, had fire as his natural element magic, and the Dark Lord Voldemort, master of the Death Eaters, had water as his natural element magic. Harry wondered what his natural element magic was...

While he wondered that, he decided to look into exactly what constituted 'Elemental Magic'. What he found surprised him. It turns out that every spell has at least some elemental properties. The book talked about Arithmantical Equations demonstrating similarities between the magic properties between one or more of the elements and the particular spell. He didn't really understand it, but the examples and comparisons it gave helped him a little.

There were spells like Incendio and Aquamenta that were fairly obvious, fire and water element spells respectively. And then there were spells like the Stunning spell Stupefy and the Shield spell Protego that had very different and unique effects, but the first was

more closely attuned to the fire element, while the other was more attuned to the water element.

What really surprised him was that Leviosa spells, pretty much any spell that made things fly through the air, were in fact air element spells. And that, with only a handful of exceptions, every transfiguration spell was either entirely, or at least strongly attuned to the earth element. But that wasn't nearly as surprising to learn that even some of the most basic spells taught at Hogwarts could and were attuned to multiple elements at the same time, just one more than the other, in the case of spells like Stupefy, Protego and such as that.

The elemental magic didn't give them their effects or anything silly like that. It was more that out of the hundreds of aspects that make up a magical spell, the elemental quotient was only a small part of it. And really it only mattered to Arithmancy experts and spell-crafters.

In looking up all of this information, Harry had come across a repeated reference. To a certain book that could be in the Hogwarts Restricted Section. Unfortunately, despite how much he required it, the Room would not bring it to him, which meant that he'd have to get a permission slip from Professor to get access to it. Which meant either walking out the Room and revealing to the world where he was and probably get Snape acquitted and back before nightfall, or waiting until the reset and interrupting his training until he found some way of convincing a Professor to grant him a permission slip to the Restricted Section of the Hogwarts Library, find the tome in question, and then repeat that as many times as necessary just to read one book.

He decided to hold off on that for right now.

The last thing was the Animagus transformation. Because of his father and the Marauders success at the transformation, Harry decided he really wanted to work on accomplishing that during his training here. After making this decision, a single book appeared right in front of him. He was really starting to get a bit freaked out how the Room did that some days...

The book title was in familiar handwriting. Harry froze and just stared at the cover for the longest time. He pulled out the Marauder's Map

and activated it. The title of the map and the handwritten title of the book on the cover were written in the same handwriting.

Just to confirm, Harry opened the book to the title page and read who the author(s) were.

A Marauder's Guide To Turning Into A Wild Animal

(...and not just in bed...)

By:

Prongs

With Assistance By: Padfoot, Mooney and Wormtail

It had been written by his father, he realized, tears welling up in his eyes. He should have known, should have asked... should have been given this instead of a stupid mirror.

But wait... what was it doing here, in the Room of Requirement of all places? While the Room had access to Hogwarts Library, he was pretty certain that the Marauders would never have left this book just laying around the shelves somewhere. In fact it was hardly even a proper book, more a journal, which he realized upon opening it further, was exactly what it was. A journal as to how the Marauders decided to and then did become Animagi.

So he started to read and he spent a long time reading up on animal transformations and how to control them, but also some of the adventures his father and friends got up to in acquiring every bit of knowledge they could, all to help their bookworm friend with his problem. It was only after doing all that reading that he was reminded it took them almost three years to do it. Until Harry figured out from reading between the lines that they had done it between classes, and even then probably only on weekends and only after First Year, after Sirius and Harry's father had figured out for themselves, Remus's secret. Oh, and Wormtail too.

Which meant that they had most likely done it in a single year, the latter half of their Second Year, and probably halfway through their Third Year, because he remembered how long it takes one to typically find answers in the Hogwarts Library. It had taken them

until practically Easter in their First Year to find that book about Nicholas Flamel and the Philosopher's Stone!

Still, this wasn't going to be an easy thing to master...

But he was the son of Prongs, the Marauder and he would do whatever it took to master it!

Author's Notes: Special thanks to Byakugan789, he really helped out as Editor on this. For a while there I was also kind of worried that I was making Harry too powerful too quickly! Then I remembered that this is fanfic and in no way answerable to anyone but me and I felt better for a while. Still... I want Harry to progress at **my** pace. Not just, turn the page and oh, he's the most powerful wizard of the ages. That gets boring sooner than most think. So, seriously people, if you like this story, if you want to keep liking it... SHARE SOME IDEAS! PLEASE! I can only do so much on my own. And for the record, I **LOVE** Reviews that ask questions and make suggestions. And I definitely don't mind people pointing out what they see as mistakes. Heck, it got me to go back and repost the first four chapters, didn't it? Anyway, if you've got an idea, or if you would like to be an editor for this story, please send it in!

Disclaimer: Certain elements of this chapter have been... borrowed and "imitated" (with the understanding that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery) from a number of fellow author's already written and posted works. Permission has not been fully discussed with many, if any of them, and at first I was going to just list the stories and links to where they are posted, but then things kept adding, changing and adding more and more. The authors in question include Lionheart, Enterprise1707_d, Lucifael, and Rorschach's Blot among several others. Be sure to read through all their HP fanfic and check out each of their homepages. See if you can identify the borrowed elements and be sure to leave plenty of reviews for those stories. They deserve it, cause those are some awesome stories there!

Chapter 6: Element

Training was so much harder than Harry had ever thought it was going to be. Not just the training itself, but the lack of observable progress made his frustration mount higher and higher. The only way he had to tell if his magic was getting more powerful was by facing the rolling death and to see how long he could hold out for. And every time that left him doing nothing but reading history books and old spell books for thirteen straight resets. That it used to be over thirty when he first started training was beside the point. He was running out of old books to review, and besides that they were all handwritten calligraphy in handmade ink, which tends to fade and be quite illegible after a thousand or more years, even with preservation spells on them.

Also, he had been at this for over two solid years now, two and a half give or take a month according to the calendar the Room of Requirement provided him daily now. He was starting to miss his friends, but... the sight of Professor McGonagall and all those lost fights against Voldemort and his Death Eaters still haunted him, and despite how tedious and unbearably boring it could be at times, Harry could not deny that he was seeing results in his training.

He only did the magic strength training once a month now, or once every thirty resets technically speaking. After his magic was recovered enough, he spent the rest of the time working on his magic control by repeatedly doing all of the exercises and magic-triathlon stuff the Room provided for him to do. He even tried to fit in the physical fitness training once in a while, but no matter what, he never saw any improvement in that regard. It was painful and not at

all beneficial to him, but Harry did understand that he needed to at least get into a habit of keeping in shape, for when he finally got out of this accursed time loop.

Still... it was depressing in and of itself how out of shape he really was and despite having the 'time' to fix it and get himself in better shape, it made no difference at all in the long run. After every time he spent the whole reset working out and physically training himself, he spent the next reset setting up a visit to the Hufflepuff party for getting Snape fired. It somehow always made him feel better and gave him the mental strength to continue his training. He even figured out how to get Hermione and Ron invited to the party after a number of times.

Unfortunately, those parties also made him wish he could just give up on training himself and go back to what was considered normal for his life, maybe even dedicate himself to finding a way to break out of this damned time loop! If nothing else, all his studying had taught him that, with the exception of the Unforgivables, there was always a way, a magical way, around the effect and/or consequences of any kind of magic. He just had to find it.

The night he went to sleep after the Hufflepuff parties though...

He had nightmares. Terrible nightmares that every person he met, every friend he made, every ally he ever felt a connection with, would be slaughtered wholesale in the Battle of the Department of Mysteries. And he could not stand that. He often redoubled his training or underwent the magic strength exercise by facing the rolling death the very next reset.

If there was anything Harry excelled at better than fighting the bad guys, it was blaming himself for not being able to beat them better so he could protect his friends. He also stopped bothering with seeing his girlfriend, seeing his best friends outside of those parties, or going to any parties except Hufflepuff parties, and then only once a month or so. Except for when he showed up in the Hospital Wing to make sure he wasn't still affected by that damned ritual at the one Slytherin party he'd gone to. At least when he allowed himself to be around all those... all of his "conquests" from the Ravenclaw parties, they no longer fawned all over him or displayed any kind of attitude towards him that wasn't entirely normal for them, prior to the time loop.

Though if he were completely honest with himself, he did kind of wish he could go back to those Ravenclaw or Slytherin parties, just once. His 'saving people thing' nature, however, would not allow it. Besides, the moment Harry started thinking about any of the girls, unless it was a day that Voldemort thought he was already dead, all of them would inevitably 'show up' in the Department of Mysteries in order to better draw him out, and unless it was a 'get Snape fired' reset, the consequences of ignoring it were actually worse than going in anyway, alone or with backup in one form or another.

Of course Harry wouldn't still be having nightmares if they didn't get the occasional bit of reinforcement. After two perspective years of resets, which would have completed his Hogwarts education anyway, he felt he might stand a chance at that point. So, the day his magic was back at full capacity, he 'fell' for Voldemort's trap and saw how he did. Some days he actually managed to go it alone, but that never ended well for him. Most often he either got the Order called in, or was caught by his friends leaving the school and the five of them plus a variety of others from the DA came with him and of course they all died. Quite painfully in many cases.

He did not do it often, but there were times where it got to a point that his frustration got the better of him and he wanted to truly see how close he might be to getting Voldemort and his Death Eaters taken out without a lot of people dying or getting hurt. Unfortunately, he hadn't found anything that would level the playing field in his favor as yet.

On that note, Harry's Animagus training was also progressing better than expected.

He had absolutely devoured that book his father had written. It turned out to be more than a simple journal of the Marauder's adventures in becoming Animagi. Originally, it had actually just been the sheets of parchment that James Potter, Sirius Black, and Peter Pettigrew had copied down from every book they could find on the subject in Hogwarts Library, whether that subject be on ways to 'cope' with a werewolf, or the process to becoming an Animagus.

After their Sixth Year at Hogwarts, around the same time they were crafting the Marauder's Map, which was mostly so Remus and James could pass their Arithmancy NEWT classes, James had

gathered all their notes on the Animagus transformation together and bound it all together into a book. He then added in some extra bits here and there about their various adventures at Hogwarts since discovering Remus's hairy little secret, but more than that, James added in his own experiences with his Animagus transformation.

As well as his theories on how he might be able to have more than one such transformation and even be able to go from animal form to animal form without having to revert to his natural form in between.

Harry had heard from everyone that he'd ever met that his mother was the brightest witch of her age, an absolute genius when it came to charms, and that she was everybody's favorite. But it wasn't until he read this book that he learned his father was just as much of a genius. Just with Transfiguration rather than Charms.

It was... hard, for him after he came to this realization. Both of his parents were absolute geniuses when it came to magic, and it took him being stuck in a time loop for nearly three years to even begin to catch up to them. His mother had rediscovered lost magic and used it to protect him from Voldemort. His father had become an Animagus while still in school! Without anyone telling him or showing him what to do at all!

And what did he have to show for it?

Nothing! Absolutely nothing!

It wasn't fair, it wasn't... right. It was . . . not . . . entirely true either, he sat down with a sigh after his silent rant against the universe.

Harry knew he'd done more than nothing, just... just not the things he felt would bring him closer to his parents and what he felt would have made them proud. Objectively, he knew better, he knew that they would love him and be proud of him no matter what he did, but still...

He was the youngest Seeker at Hogwarts in more than a century. He'd fought and killed a thousand year old basilisk when he was twelve. He'd learned and was able to cast a Corporeal Patronus charm at thirteen. He'd been entered, and won the Triwizard Tournament at fourteen, during which he outraced a dragon, saved two people from the bottom of the Black Lake in a little over an hour,

and fought and escaped from the most dangerous Dark Lord in recent history.

His father was a genius at Transfiguration, his mother was a genius with Charms and apparently even Potions according to some. He, Harry Potter, apparently was a genius at Defense Against The Dark Arts.

Now, thanks to this time loop, he had an opportunity to become a genius at everything else his parents had been good at, and more.

The Animagus transformation was somewhat of a controversial topic, according to the actual texts and histories regarding it. There were stories and legends about gods and titans turning into all sorts of animals, quite frequently in fact. There was the legend about Merlin and Mab, the 'teacher' of Morgana and Merlin together, having a "Sorcerer's Duel" by which they each changed into various kinds of creatures and tried to kill each other. They each turned into over a hundred different animals, not all of them even vertebrates!

Since the time of Hogwarts, however, there had only ever been an official record of one wizard or witch having only one animal form, and that form being registered with the Ministry of Magic. Other than legends and ancient 'stories' passed down third or fourth hand, there was not so much as a single instance of evidence to suggest that it was even possible to have more than one animal form, or that it would be possible to switch from one animal to another without reverting back to human first.

Harry's father, however, believed it was possible. He even had a few working theories on how to make it happen. Unfortunately, he never got around to actually experimenting with those theories while at school, or if he did, he was never able to document it in the book here. Harry was also certain that if his father could have changed into an animal more dangerous than a stag, he would have used it against Voldemort the night he attacked their home, as there are just some animals even wizards are afraid to face. No matter who they are. It was obvious that, even if his father had eventually succeeded, it did him little good at the end.

Of course that did not mean that Harry was going to stop trying to become an Animagus himself, and a multi-animal Animagus at that!

The way it was written out in the book, becoming an Animagus required three things; knowing what kind of animal your personality was most like, an understanding of Occlumency to separate your mind from the animal's mind, and the proper spell. A spell that had to be cast by another magic user onto the target. The complicated part, and how the spell could go horribly wrong is if the target was not keeping solid focus on either the animal they wanted to change into, or on their core personality and what they were most like, then it was possible to become some sort of hybrid mix of human and two or more different animals. More than that, the spell forced you into an animal body with your own mind still intact, and it was up to you to access your magic and transform yourself back into a human.

The reason that becoming an Animagus was so rare was because a large number of those that attempted the transformation never could change back. Thus they became humans trapped in the body of an animal, fully aware of what they had lost and had become, unlike a human transfigured into an animal, who became an animal with an animal mind. That actually was the consequence of being found as an unregistered Animagus, and why Rita Skeeter had caved to Hermione's demands with that threat looming over her head. An illegal Animagus was locked into their animal form, fully aware of being a human magic user and being stuck as a non-magical animal, unable to communicate even.

Some might say it's a fate worse than death. Still others, those that had never met a Dementor, might say it's worse than Azkaban. Frankly, Harry found the idea attractive, provided he didn't become some unbearable animal that no one would even want to look at, let alone be.

Still, with the time loops, Harry had a unique opportunity here. He hoped. Spells that affected physical changes, Harry had noticed, disappeared after a reset, being as though they were never cast. Harry was hoping that he could cast the spell on himself, master his animal form in a day, or so, and then by the next 'day' it would be like he'd never cast the spell in the first place and his Animagus form wouldn't be locked.

That was something else put into the book; the full Arithmantical equation for the Animagus spell. Harry didn't understand a single number of it, but the notes his father put on the pages following the

spell allowed him to realize that the Animagus spell had actually been designed to limit the target to only one animal transformation. It was the final page of the book that Harry found what he'd been looking for and what his father had probably spent a great deal of time on developing.

It was a new Animagus spell. The Arithmantical equation had been written on the front side of the page, and on the back was the detailed instructions on the wand movements and the incantation, differing from the original Animagus spell by one word, and an extra twirl of the wand on the end. It took him about an hour to learn both, and an extra ten minutes to be able to cast it the same he could with all his other spells now, silent and with little to no wand movement.

Unfortunately it still had to be cast on someone else, rather than oneself. Harry had an easy fix to that and required a mirror from the Room. It gave him the Mirror of Erised.

He was a bit nonplussed at seeing that cursed magical item once again, clearly remembering all the times he'd been hypnotized by it and then the final time he'd seen it, which was also the first time he'd confronted Voldemort since he was a baby. Therefore, Harry was very careful not to look into it until he was ready and made sure to stand back a fair distance from it. He remembered being caught and hypnotized by the thing in his First Year, and he had too much to do to waste time on silly dreams and desires when he could instead be doing something.

His magic fully rested, and his Occlumency as strong as he could make it after all this time, Harry faced his reflection in the Mirror of Erised from over ten feet away, and cast his father's Animagus spell on himself, the spell bolt reflecting back at him, just as he desired it to do.

His body morphed quicker than the change with Polyjuice Potion did, and the next thing he knew he was on all fours and the scope of the room had changed quite a bit. Things were also quite clear, and he was more alert to movement than before. In the back of his mind, he could... feel the... the animal thoughts just hanging there. A bundle of instincts and base desires, nothing else. There was no second mind or need to struggle. The animal he had become was an herbivore, and more often prey than predator.

He cantered, yes cantered, up to the mirror and took a good look at himself. It was hard, his eyes were spaced wider apart and it was hard to get his binocular vision to focus on what was right in front of him, but he managed it soon enough.

He saw a small deer. The instincts at the back of his mind clamored, wanting to know if what he saw was another deer and a threat, or one of his siblings and a rival. The instincts had no concept of the sense of self and could not identify what he was seeing as a reflection of itself. Harry, however, could. And he was also a bit disappointed. He wasn't a stag, like his father. And his antlers were kind of funny, rounded and they looked like they were covered in fur or fuzz of some kind.

That was when he remembered something from when he was a child, the Dursley's had dragged him to the mall one day so Dudley could sit on Santa's lap. They hadn't been able to get a hold of the usual people for him to stay with, and there had been something about a Social Worker, he couldn't remember right then, but one thing that did stick out in Harry's mind were the animals they had in a petting zoo not too far from "Santa's North Pole". Eight reindeer, a few mounted up for rides, stood about for the public to see and even pet some of them. He looked just like them, he realized.

Well, not quite, Harry acknowledged after taking a closer look. The antlers weren't very big, only having about five inches on each of them, marking him as being young he was sure. Around his eyes were black marks, a bit like a racoon's eyes, but with a black band going around the side of his head to his moveable parabolic ears. Also, hardly noticeable from a distance, but easy to see up close was a white lightning bolt patch of white fur on his forehead. His glasses and his scar he realized. Distinguishing markings indeed.

Harry turned and moved away from the mirror, not wanting to get trapped by it, just in case of, and noticed something as he stepped. He looked down and tried to hold up one of his forelegs, not an easy thing to do for a reindeer, and took a look at his hoof. It was silver.

He blinked his large green-brown eyes and remembered that the reindeer at the mall all had black, cloven hooves, making it impossible to shoe them like horses, but also giving them greater agility on snow covered mountain passes. Some might have been light brown at the most, to match with their fur, but he was quite

positive he'd never seen one with silver hooves. He put his hoof back down and took another step. He felt it again. If he were human, he might have smiled. As it were, he snorted in delight.

Harry started to run around the room. Before he'd even made a full circuit, he was running on air.

Not figuratively either. As he continued to run, he actually flew through the air, bouncing off the walls and even running along the ceiling for a bit. So long as he kept up his momentum, he found that he could defy gravity as easily he could on his broom.

He was a Flying Reindeer.

That was worth the risk, he immediately decided. But still, it was time to get down to business, as it were. Harry angled for the floor and slowed to a stop. He placed himself back in front of the mirror, a few feet back from it actually, and started focusing on becoming him again. In the mirror, he immediately shifted back into his natural form and smiled. Harry looked around and saw it the way a reindeer does and let out a sigh, that came out as a frustrated snort.

He looked back at his reflection, this time using it as a focus for what he wanted to change back into. He accessed and poured his magic into his focus. He didn't just shove it at the problem either, but instead focused and controlled his magic as he'd been training to do. And he didn't dare do this one part at a time, he wanted to be whole when he changed and there was also the risk that he could get stuck as an in between half man half animal creature that only another magic user could fix.

So he kept his eye on the image of his natural form in the mirror and focused on changing his body from a reindeer back into a human wizard. In the end, it took him the rest of that reset to change back. He had started around noon, just after he'd finished his lunch. He wasn't human again until three in the morning. He didn't bother changing back, instead just falling asleep on the bed the Room provided for him.

The very next day he started practicing with his Animagus form, changing into a reindeer without the spell this time, and then changing back. It took him less time, but it was not instantaneous either.

Still, he kept up the hard work and he had his first form mastered in less than a week, able to move to it seamlessly a day after that. Then he stood before the Mirror once again and cast the modified Animagus spell at himself once more. When he'd finished morphing, everything was a lot bigger. Because he was a lot shorter.

He was also standing on two legs and upright. And everything was so clear! It was like he'd been blind all his life and could only now begin to see! He shifted and took in the rest of his body when he felt some unfamiliar sensations.

He was a bird.

Taking a closer look at his reflection, which was easy to identify even from such a great distance, he saw that he was a hawk or falcon of some kind. Not an eagle, he wasn't that big. Seeing the same racoon-like markings over his eyes and the blue-feathered lightning bolt mark on his crown, Harry spread his wings and even did a bit of modeling for himself, turning and looking at his back and his tail feathers.

Without having a bird guidebook on hand, he couldn't be certain, but he felt confident enough to say that he was some breed of falcon. The wings were aerodynamic and slim, made more for diving at high speeds through the air than soaring above the clouds as hawks and eagles wings were for. Also, his feathers were more blue and white than just gray, but made him appear silver from a distance when held together like it was on his small body.

Changing back to human was easier this time. But it still took him more than an hour the first time around. He then spent the rest of the reset changing back and forth between human and falcon and even taking short flights around the room, which expanded considerably to allow him to really fly. And then he changed into a Flying Reindeer. And then he changed from a Flying Reindeer into a Falcon. And then from a Falcon back into a Flying Reindeer, and then back into a human. And then he did it all over again just so he could.

After that, becoming an Animagus got really easy... sort of.

He limited himself to one new form per day. After casting the spell, he barely needed an hour before he was a master of it. And at first it took less than a minute to shift to all his forms and confirm that he could interchange between them without any major consequences. Then eventually it started taking ten minutes and more to shift to all of his forms.

Over a year of resets passed and Harry soon had over four hundred Animagus forms, nearly five hundred. At least twenty of which were actually magical creatures, such as his first form the Flying Reindeer. One of which was actually a dragon. The Norse identified it as a Night Fury. The Ministry identified it as a Norwegian Night Fury, and one of the most dangerous dragon breeds still alive. There were none in captivity.

The rest of his magical forms were just as obscure as those two, (a Flying Reindeer and a nearly extinct breed of dragon), but just as useful he thought. In order of discovery, his twenty magical Animagus forms were; Flying Reindeer, Nibi no Nekomata (Japanese Two-Tailed Cat), Ifrit (Arabian Fire Beast), Chupacabra (Mexican Goat-Eater), Kyuubi no Kitsune (Japanese Nine-Tailed Fox), Mountain Gnome (can burrow through stone as well as hard earth), Nemean Lion (cub), Gryffin (cub), Eastern Fire Salamander (It carries the fire the spawned it on its tail), Cerberus (three-headed dog, like Fluffy), Acromantuala, Cockatrice, Frost Giant, Kawa-Uso (Japanese Magic Otter), Athene Owl (Greek owl that could do everything a phoenix can with lightning instead of fire), Shishi (Chinese Lion-Dog), Shokushu-Oni (Tentacle Demon), White Worm-Snake, Snow Wolf (Magical Variety), and Norwegian Night Fury (Dragon).

On top of that he had almost every kind of animal that he could think of, and even more that he'd never known about before he'd become them. He was at least one of every kind of bird, if not every species of the entire branch of the Animal Kingdom. Not to mention all the other kinds of animals, both mammals, fish, and even some insects and arachnids. He could even turn into a slug... a really, really big slug, but a slug nevertheless.

That was something else he noticed in his Animagus training here, how he could tell the difference between normal animals and magical creatures. He could still sense magic when he was a magical creature, and still use it to a limited degree. The limitation of

what the magical creature could do with it, but it remained magical. Despite some of the normal animals he became being extremely bizarre (giant slugs notwithstanding), he knew they were not magical because he could not feel any magic from them.

When he became his first dinosaur he kind of got freaked out a bit, but he quickly got over it. Pterodactyl might not have been his first choice, but he enjoyed it all the same. He could actually identify over a dozen off the top of his head, but because when he changed he didn't look exactly like the cartoons and picture books showed a dinosaur to be, it took him some time to figure out on a couple of them. For starters, some dinosaurs had fur. His Pterodactyl form had feather-like fur all over its body, just more like down-feathers than what he had when he changed into a falcon, hawk or eagle.

He could change into a T-Rex too, but there were differences yet again from what he saw on TV. For one thing, he wasn't as big as all those skeletons in museums. For another, his arms were stronger and more agile and able to be used than what most people said a T-Rex could do with its arms. He found, if he left it out when he changed, he could even pick up and hold his wand and even wave it about. He couldn't use it though. Despite all the hype it got, a T-Rex was not magical, and not an ancient form of dragon, so he cataloged it in with his normal animals.

After a year of straight up Animagus training, interspersed occasionally with his magical control training, (he didn't dare risk facing the rolling death unless he wanted to take a week or longer vacation from his Animagus training), Harry decided that nearly five hundred animal forms was enough. For now.

He needed something else, another edge to his fight. He didn't want to face the Department of Mysteries battle yet again, not this soon after his latest failure. He wanted to have something more in his corner.

Which is when he remembered the books about Elemental Magic. Looking through them once again, Harry discovered there might be a way, other than learning and studying every spell that could or was an 'elemental' spell, which he could get a boost in learning how to use his natural magical element.

And whose to say that he had to limit himself to just one. He had infinite amount of time after all, it should be possible for him to learn and control all the Elemental Magics that there were to learn. He began to research.

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It took over a month of resets, searching through every book that the Room could pull out of the Hogwarts Library and it's own hidden collection, but eventually he found a magical tome that contained what he needed. He spent four days doing nothing but reading that tome and studying it's subject material; how to master Elemental Magic.

According to the tome, actually every witch, wizard, and even ordinary humans, were 'compatible' with all of the elements. But for some, certain elemental magics were easier and more . . . potent than with anyone else. In other words, everyone had a "natural element" that they were better at than anyone else, unless there was someone else that also shared their "natural element" in magic as well.

It mostly went on to enlighten the reader about the individual elements and what was and what was not actual Elemental Magic, but amidst all the factual information regarding the various magical elements, there were tidbits that were genuinely useful to Harry in what he wanted to do.

To begin with, as far as Western magic was concerned, there were four elements, and then various sub-elements that were either not as powerful, or were actually a mixture or division off of the four primary. They were Air, Earth, Fire, and Water. The book talked about how there were three magical spirits that governed each domain of each element. Minor, Medium, and Major spirits for each. It in turn revealed that these spirits were actually ancient fey, magical fairies that channeled and gathered the power of the elements for other magical creatures to draw upon.

A magic user, whether human or not, who knew the Name of these elemental spirits could forge a contract, which would allow the magic user to wield the elemental power that the spirits gathered and

focused. More often than not, it was a simple exchange of power; magical power for elemental power.

To summon a Minor spirit would be like casting a day's worth of spells all at once, but it would give the wielder absolute control over the element in question. To summon a Medium spirit, it would most likely cost the magic user a certain amount of time, during which they would have absolutely no magic. Whether an hour, a day, a week or longer that's where negotiating the contract came into play. To summon the Major spirit, of any element, however, that moved from magical power into life essence. The old stories about trading days or years of your life for favors from spirits, demons and djinn, that is where those stories came from, wizards bargaining with the Major Elemental spirits.

The more Harry read into the tome, the more he discovered, the more he was interested in doing this. It was exactly what he needed, and more. Unlike with standard magical training, elemental magic training only required learning control. There was no need to boost your power, you'd already be channeling a primal element of nature, you don't get any more powerful than that, magically speaking.

That actually was the gist of everything the book warned him about. Whereas he needed to learn magic control and various means of boosting his magic power just to cast spells to any degree as a wizard, with the elements the power would always be at his fingertips and responding to whatever he wanted it to do. The control, when it came to Elemental Magic training, was in not letting whichever element run amok and blast everything and everyone around him. So if he did this, until he learned to control it, he'd actually be causing tornadoes, earthquakes and rockfalls, explosions and spontaneous combustion, and tsunamis everywhere he went. Until he learned to control it.

The last thing he read in the tome was a detailed ritual to help him determine which was his natural element, as well as get the attention of the various Elemental spirits so he could have a chance at forging contracts with each of them. He was a bit reluctant to be involved with any ritual after everything he'd dealt with concerning that aspect of magic, but it was the only way that he could attain that level of power, and it was something he needed in order to face Voldemort seriously.

That was his plan anyway, until he walked into the Room one reset and instead of his usual training room, or pile of books, there was just the magical blackboard and a table filled with materials and a ritual space in front of it.

Normally the tome on Elemental Magic would appear, as Harry hadn't quite finished reading it just yet. Instead, the blackboard filled with instructions. They were instructions to perform the ritual to determine elemental compatibility he recognized from the tome. It was a simple ritual, thankfully, but one he only wanted to do after he'd read through the tome a few more times. Hogwarts, apparently, felt differently and wanted him to do it now. The materials, of course, were all there and prepared, all he had to do was set up and perform the ritual.

Seeing as he had nothing better to do, Harry gathered the materials and did just that. He placed the appropriate candles in the proper locations, he drew the circles and the correct sigils and runes at their correct points, triple checking all his work at each step. His so far minimal experience with rituals had driven him to be extremely cautious when dealing with such things. Once he was absolutely sure that he had everything correct for the setting, he sat down and memorized the actual ritual, running through it in his head over a dozen times, some steps even more than that, before he finally decided to begin.

He removed all his clothing, advice that the tome assured the reader was good advice, and left his wand and any and all other magical items behind before stepping into the center of the circle, kneeling and began to recite the spell to call forth the elemental spirits.

As he recited, he took the time to observe the ritual circle he'd completed. It was actually two large circles, an outer boundary and an inner circle, the one he was at in the middle, and then sets of three smaller circles each going out from that center one in four directions between the two..

The beginning of the spell was precisely spoke Latin, and from his very basic understanding of the language, it separated the circles from the rest of the world and from each other and established the boundaries of all within the domain of the circles. As soon as he finished reciting the spell, he felt something flow out of him and watched as all of the circles lit up, the inner and outer two the

brightest. Now came the improvised part, he thought, taking a deep breath and letting it out slowly.

"Harry James Potter," he spoke his full name, because the tome said that one must use their True Name in such rituals, as well as a title, so he couldn't help but wince as he continued, "known as the Boy Who Lived, seeks to be of the spirits, the elements, and of magic. He wishes to form an alliance with the magical spirits of the elements, to seek their allegiance and form a contract. Who will answer?"

This was where things got... tricky. At least according to the tome. Either nothing happened and the wizard/witch had two more chances to issue their claim, or one of three other things happened. Either they died, exactly how remained a mystery. Or a single elemental spirit showed up. Or...

Twelve columns of light shot towards the ceiling, originating from the twelve circles around him. They had different colors and intensities, the lesser intense ones the closest to him, the the most intense the furthest from him. One set was colored the yellow/orange/red of fire. One set was clear/white/blue of water. Another was the brown/gray/black of earth and stone. And the other was three columns of wind and air, more like contained tornadoes than magical pillars.

Harry gulped, felt his fear, and then released it, embracing his resolve. He did not move or speak.

The columns changed, shifting, becoming something else. In the closest circles, there was a small fire, burning on nothing but itself, a floating rock the size of his head, a small puddle of water that filled the circle and appeared impossibly deep despite its small size, and a small tornado that actually fit and had room to move about inside it's circle. In the circles behind those were the next level of elemental spirits; a large fire that filled its boundary with flame and roared higher than Hagrid stood, a boulder just as large, a geyser sprang up, and a whirlwind filled the second columns. In the third row of columns, that's where things got scary, no matter how resolved he was, if Harry caught warning that any of these last four wanted him hurt or dead, he was running. And still would probably end up hurt and dead, but the point remained. The small circles he'd drawn on the stone floor could not hope to contain all that these Major Spirits

of the Elements were, so instead a single eye in each column was all that was there. One made of Fire, one made of Earth (floating eyeball rock, really disturbing), one made of Water, and one made of air (most disturbing of all was that there was no OBVIOUS effect, but you knew the air itself there was looking at you!).

The silence and the tension drug on. The elements were infinitely patient, and Harry obviously was not, but still, he'd called the meeting, as it were, and he had already told them why he'd asked for the meeting when he requested it. He didn't expect anything, didn't know what to expect really. That's where the tome and the information Hogwarts could provide him became less than clear. All of the Spirits of the Elements showing up during this ritual had only happened six times before. And the last one had been in the time of Merlin, to Merlin himself!

Harry decided not to look too closely into the meaning behind that.

Suddenly, and he didn't know how or why, everything shifted. The eyes, the eyes of the Major Spirits were in the circles closest to him and they inspected him at every level. He allowed them, hiding nothing, but neither did he go out of his way to show them everything. He looked only at his hands, which were white knuckled around his knees as he fought not to flee or do anything that might get him killed.

The Spirits seemed to be discussing something amongst themselves. Well, not really to themselves, it was just that while Harry could sense them talking, he had no way of understanding or communicating with them in the first place, so it made no difference. Finally, a decision, it would appear, had been made.

The other Spirits left, and one by one the circles vanished and the Major Spirits' eyes floated freely. Harry worried that they might run rampant and destroy the school... or him. Instead, after looking at him for a time longer, the Major Spirits of Fire, Earth and Water vanished until Harry felt only the Air around him.

I Will Be The First

He didn't bother deluding himself that he didn't know who or what that was. The voice was female, and could turn cold, warm, harsh, and gentle all in the same breath.

I Am The Air, The Wind, And The Sky. Learn The Names Of My Family And I Shall Tell You Mine.

He recognized the challenge when he heard one and merely nodded his head, accepting the challenge.

Your Name

The wind paused and the air held still, like the feeling right before a storm unleashed its full fury.

Is The One Who Lived.

Harry passed out upon hearing his True Name, and the ritual ended.

When he came to, he wasn't sure how long he'd been unconscious on the floor like that, but he was too busy being grateful he was alive to care too much about that. He took some time to gather himself and while he did that, he noticed that either the room or the Elements themselves had cleaned up the mess left from his attempt at the Elemental Magic Identification Ritual. Until he remembered the last few moments and realized that his attempt was actually a success.

"So my element is air, huh?" he said to himself in the silence of the Room of Requirement. It was an oddly haunting sound after so many years of silence (he hadn't needed to speak spells to cast them for almost that long now). "But what did she mean by she was the first?"

He tried to think it through, but before he could brood too much more on it, he noticed that the blackboard had something written on it. Getting up, getting dressed and retrieving his glasses so he could read it, he saw that it was the first of six magical exercises that one did in learning to control their element. In his case, the element of air and wind and sky.

The first exercise consisted of breathing in and out, drawing in as much air as he could each time, and try to feel the magic in the air, in the breath that he drew from it. And from there he was to move onto the second exercise, by then focusing that magic into the center of his hands and use it to cut a leaf. Not crush, cut. There

was even a visual diagram, which moved of course, to show him the steps.

Getting comfortable on the cushion that he'd been provided by Hogwarts, Harry proceeded to meditate on his breath and focus on feeling the magic in the air and drawing that magic to the center of his hands, in which held a leaf that he'd picked up from the ground in front of him. There were about a dozen or so still waiting to be picked up.

It took him more than an hour to finally feel the trickle of magic in the air, and even longer to gather enough of it to send down to the palms of his hands, only for the leaf to be blown out of his hands from the uncontrolled gust of wind he'd blasted it with. It took him a minute after that to realize that he'd been using too much power and he needed to work on control of it first before he tried to do anything significant.

He started over and this time just used the trickle as soon as it came in, and soon that trickle became a steady stream of power, as constant and flowing as his breath. It came in, flowed down to his palms, down his wand arm, cut across the leaf, went up his off-hand and then out when he exhaled. This constant flow of energy, of magic through him allowed him to focus in a way he never had before.

Several hours later, when he looked down, he saw that he was about a third of the way through cutting the leaf. A few minutes later, after he had time to rest, he finished that leaf in one sitting. He did the next just as fast, and the next, and the next, until the room stopped providing him leaves to cut. It was about time for lunch anyway.

He looked up from the floor filled with cut leaves to find his lunch sitting there waiting for him. He ate quickly and then moved on to the third elemental control exercise.

He had to use the elemental magic to cut stone this time. And not just any stone, it had to be a stone block, the size and shape of breadbox, only rectangular cut. Hogwarts provided six such blocks for him to use, because apparently he had to cut the stones in six different ways. Across the middle on the slim side, across the middle on the long side, both vertically and horizontally for both, and then

diagonally from one corner to the opposite. It took him twice as long as it did to finish all the leaves to get just the first stone cut, but after that he had learned the trick to it and was done with the others in less than an hour after that. He had dinner after he was finished.

Knowing the consequences if he didn't complete all of these elemental control exercises as soon as possible, Harry seriously debated whether or not to go to bed or to keep working. He was pretty exhausted by this point, but if he didn't master all the exercises, there was a real chance of the power controlling him rather than the other way around.

Therefore, in spite of his exhaustion, he tackled the fourth exercise. Cutting running water. A small waterfall appeared at the back of the room. Harry walked up to it, rolled up his sleeves, and started focusing his magic and the elemental magic he breathed in and let flow throughout his body. The water splashed, but only as much as if he'd flicked his finger into it for a moment. He kept focusing and worked tirelessly to unleash the proper amount of wind into the water.

He kept at it until he passed out right around seven o'clock in the morning when time reset.

AN: Well, some good news, some bad news, and yet another request to you the readers. Good news, I'm at least one and a half, if not two full chapters ahead of posting, so for the next couple of weeks, expect a regular update for this story at the beginning of each week. Bad news, as I said previously I can be a very demanding author to work with, as my so far only volunteer Editor discovered these past couple of weeks and has since ceased being my editor, for this story. No hard feelings towards him, as I have said I can be very demanding and all of us have Real Lives to worry about first and foremost. Therefore, despite being "ahead" at the moment, that may not last past the next couple of updates unless I get another editor to volunteer their services. See the bottom Author's Notes section in Chapter 5 if you're at all interested in volunteering time and attention to read through and edit previews of upcoming chapters, as well as brainstorm a bit here and there.

Finally, the request, which I sincerely hope you all respond to, as I need more than just a little help in this regard. In future chapters, (past the next two or three anyway), Harry is going to apprentice

himself to the Weasley Twins and begin to learn the Ignoble Art Of Pranking, and also start pranking everybody everywhere that he can everyday, for the fun of it. Unfortunately, I don't do pranks very well, and I'm doing my best not to steal other people's pranks from their own stories, but it's harder to come up with genuine pranking that isn't just another variation of bullying (the way I write, that's how it comes across), and in reading the books and watching the movies, Harry's really not that much of a prankster in the first place, ergo it goes against his character. Which means I'm having trouble picturing Harry do much more than try to start a food fight or use Zonko's and Weasley Wizarding Wheezes on everybody simultaneously. Therefore, my request... I need prank ideas. Please and Thank You!

Chapter 7: Neville's Idea

Harry woke up and lay there in his bed. He stared up at the empty ceiling of his canopy bed for the longest time, ignoring everything else around him. He was filled with an exhaustion that, if he were honest with himself, he'd been ignoring for quite a while now. It wasn't magical or physical, it was mental.

Harry had become extremely focused on improving himself and his magical skills and he had not allowed himself to take 'weekends' or 'vacations' since he began. The sight of his Head of House laying there like that had been extremely motivating. And he'd just discovered his natural elemental magic, which he really should be working on immediately so he didn't lose control like it warned against in the tome. Instead, all he felt was tired and he really didn't feel like getting up. He recalled that he hadn't seen or spoken to any of his friends in more than... Bloody Hell! More than four years now! Seeing them as he ran out of Gryffindor tower certainly didn't count.

At the thought of his friends, something stirred in him that was not tired. Anticipation, longing, a strong desire to see those he cared about.

Well... one day off couldn't hurt, could it?

He got up, ignoring the smell, and blasted Ron out of bed with a cold wind. It wasn't until he was washing in the shower that he even recognized what he'd done. He hadn't meant to do that! Apparently the elemental magic exercises that he did after determining his element did more for him than he'd thought it had. After all, if he hadn't as much control as those exercises had given him, Ron would have been blasted through the wall and outside of the tower on his way to the North Pole! He considered going back to the Room of Requirement again, to resume his training, focusing just on elemental magic for the day, but his exhaustion, and he suspected, depression returned full force at the thought. Instead he decided to go to breakfast with his friends and just spend time with them, not worrying about anything. He felt better immediately.

At breakfast, Harry was, to his friends, oddly quiet, and giving them all funny looks. Especially when Hermione and Ginny both insisted on sitting on either side of him. He was just grateful that their reaction wasn't nearly so bad as it had been that one day, years ago,

where they did nothing but stare at him and do everything he said with slavish devotion. He still regretted doing that to his friends. Not so much with the Sexy Sexy Witches, but for the rest, there was an undeniable feeling of guilt associated with that mistake.

Today, just being in the presence of his friends was like balm on an open wound, instantly soothing and it let him relax and feel content. During a lull in the casual conversation, which typically consisted of Ron complaining about their OWLs schedule, Hermione berating Ron and offering to help Harry study (she'd done that even before the deal with the Ultimate Dare) and Neville and Ginny making sympathetic noises here and there at appropriate points, a strange thought occurred to Harry.

What would his friends do if they were stuck in this time loop?

Well, there really wasn't any reason why he couldn't find out, was there?

"Hey guys," said Harry as conversation trailed off between them all, "If you were stuck in a time loop, what would you do?"

"What?" blurted out Ron, "What are talking about mate? What's a time loopy? Some kind of muggle sweet?"

Harry blinked and then he laughed, and he laughed long and hard, and probably sounded a bit unhinged at one point. "Oh god, Ron, I missed your sense of humor!" he exclaimed, slapping his friend on the back. "But no," continued Harry, all trace of humor gone in a heartbeat, "I'm talking about a magical phenomenon actually. Where time, say a single day, is stuck on a loop, constantly repeating itself. In other words, today is the same day as every day. Tomorrow will actually be today, just as yesterday was today, and only you are aware of it. Everybody else thinks it's just another regular day, but you are the only one that is aware of the time loop and that there is no tomorrow, it'll just be today all over again."

"That... makes no sense..." said Ron.

"Oh, I get it," said Hermione, "A moral dilemma game. What If? I always wanted to play one of those, but my parents patently refused, and I never had any friends that wanted to play it with me. What a wonderful idea Harry!" She hugged him, and maybe spent a bit too

long with her cheek against his chest, but he pretended not to notice when she finally let him go.

"So, what if you were stuck in the same day and couldn't get out of it? What if there were no tomorrow?" Harry repeated his challenge.

"Hm," Neville mulled it over before answering, "No tomorrow? That would mean there would be no consequences. There wouldn't any punishments! We could do whatever we want!"

Harry blinked, another thought occurring to him in that moment. He could do . . . whatever . . . he wanted . . . to do! Harry smiled.

"Yeah, you're right Nev, thanks!" Harry stood up, a manic grin splitting his face. Screw responsibility! He thought. And screw everyone that had ever pissed on him! Until he finally found a way out of this hell, the only lasting consequences were magical ones. Physical damage was negated and could be repeated as many times as he wanted and nobody, the following day anyway, could do anything against him at all!

Harry stood up from the table, turned to face the Head table, pointed his wand and unleashed a silent, motionless spell. Three streams of different colored lights, nearly side-by-side all three of them, shot out and exploded the golden throne at the center of the table into the air, blasted it apart, as well as the ceiling and rafters directly above to come crashing down on top of the sole occupant of that seat. Harry's smile grew wider as a feeling of immense satisfaction filled him. He wasn't going to play by their rules any more!

The entire Great Hall was dead silent. An apt metaphor, given that they had all just witnessed Harry Potter murder their, interim, Headmistress.

"Ah," he sighed, sitting back down, "that felt good." He looked down at his normal breakfast. The same breakfast that was served every morning at Hogwarts, even before the time loop, not that he could remember it that clearly, but he did remember that this had been what he'd always had for breakfast.

"I want something different," he announced, staring at his breakfast tray. "Coffee, black, three sugars. Flapjacks, and cereal with cold milk. Fruit Loops, I think."

To the shock and amazement of all watching, his tray vanished and reappeared moments later with exactly what he'd requested. He tried the coffee, took a bite of the pancakes and the cereal and announced, "Perfect! Excellent! I'll want something different for lunch of course, but excellent work!"

The Great Hall had never been so quiet.

"What do you guys want to do after breakfast?" Harry asked, breaking the quiet.

Harry chuckled merrily as he poured potion after potion after potion down the funnel, the end of which came to about halfway down Severus Snape's throat. So far he'd already exploded, reconstituted, grown fur of all sorts of color, gone bald, become incredibly lucky by not dying, and still the next moment incredibly unlucky by not dying, and turned into every non-gaseous element on the Periodic Table, including some that wouldn't be discovered for ten or twenty more years.

"Keep it up! I'm running out over here!" he called to his work force, IE every student below Fourth Year, who were all slaving over every cauldron that could be found, making more and more potions to shove down Snape's throat, regardless of what the cumulative effect may or may not be. The really cool part? He only had to ask once and every single one of them were doing it enthusiastically and going out of their way to maximize their potion making skills in order to keep up with the demand.

The upper years were all taking bets on how long their Potions Professor was going to last, and occasionally Harry would let one or more of them help in pouring in the potions every now and then.

"How ya doin' there Perfesser Snapey?" Harry called, looking over the funnel to catch the paralyzed man's eyes. Harry felt the Legilimency probe, probably threats to stop this or else, something along those lines he was sure. Rather than bother paying attention, Harry almost gleefully showed the Professor the imaginings of what he planned to do next. The greasy bastard's fear response was actually powerful enough that he briefly broke the paralysis and would have screamed out in terror, thrashing and trying to get away.

Harry hit him before he'd even squeaked with yet another Full Body Bind.

"Good to hear!" shouted Harry over the noise. "NEXT!"

"Er, Harry, are you sure we should be doing this?" asked Ron uncertainly. He was currently holding an even bigger funnel with the end being even longer, and having an odd angle to it as well.

"Absolutely not," answered Harry, quite cheerfully. "Ready for this Ron?"

"No!" he exclaimed, but he joined Harry and together they lined up their target and shoved all ahead full.

[illegible]

They didn't quite get it in the first time and kept having to shove forward again and again, until it got stuck and Harry felt they had to pull out a bit to get even more force before it was finally all the way in. Once the funnel was in place, Harry turned to Hermione expectantly and asked, "The first vial, my dear. How are the workers doing on the next batch?"

Blushing, Hermione handed him the potion vial and answered, "They'll have it ready within the hour, Harry. Harry? Are you sure we should be doing this?"

"No, in fact I'm quite sure that no one should ever do this, ever.
NEXT!"

"Is this it?" asked Harry eagerly, snagging the page of notes from Hermione's hands. She immediately snatched it right back and glared at him, which just made him smile more.

"Yes," she yanked it back out of his reach and warned him, "but it wasn't easy. Glamours are just illusions after all, and the most useful illusions are only used by witches and therefore not of much practical use to most people. The particular illusion you wanted to use was very abstract. I could find almost no supporting information

about it, other than the book you provided me with to see if I could combine it with another glamour spell. Where did you get that anyway?"

"Madam Pince likes Sugar Quills. I got her a hundred of every flavor," he answered while still trying to grab the parchment that Hermione was, so far, successfully keeping from him. "And commissioned a dozen more new flavors, to be delivered to her before the end of the day. I asked her for advice on what to do to Snape next. She handed me the book and showed me the page. I wanted to know if you could make it last longer than just the standard minute. And," he huffed and stopped jumping after the paper, "can you?"

"Yes. I did the arithmantical calculations..."

"In your head," he interrupted.

She smiled, but ignored him, "...I did the arithmantical calculations and determined that it is possible to safely combine the Hell-Viewing illusion with the Red-Moon-Cycle illusion method. Although I strongly recommend against doing this to any decent human beings, as there is a very real risk of the person going insane and becoming a homicidal maniac focused solely on revenge and attaining enough power to destroy the one that initially put them under this illusion, forcing the target to live an unsightly and hate filled life."

"Duly noted. I'm only going to use it on Snape anyway, and he's already focused his unsightly hate on me and my father, so it won't make any difference in the long run," replied Harry as he finally got his hands on the parchment and quickly memorized the spell that would put Snape in an illusion of the worst personal hell the man can imagine for the equivalent of three days per second. Hermione's modifications to the illusion spell would make it last for one full minute, with each second lasting for three days, times sixty is one hundred and eighty days, or six months in other words. He planned on casting it consecutively for one solid hour.

"Hm, easy enough to cast. What's with this warning in the corner here?" he asked, pointing.

"Oh, because of the modifications, the spell actually becomes quite powerful, draining magic at three times the rate that one would

expect for a glamour of any magnitude, and as such I strongly recommend that no one cast it more than ten times in a single day with at least one and a half hours rest between castings," she dutifully answered.

"OK. Let me know if I start turning green, OK?" requested Harry as he turned to the bound and terrified Snape and cast the spell with a simple point of his wand. Snape screamed through the gag covering his mouth before his eyes rolled up in his head and his body went into convulsive fits, a result of struggling to escape hundreds of times a 'day' in a matter of seconds. Then Harry cast it again, and again, and again... An hour later, Harry considered extending things another hour, but he'd actually gotten rather bored as, while undoubtedly Snape was being tortured relentlessly, there wasn't much to look at and thus it got boring real quick.

"Harry," Hermione weakly called out to her friend, "how—how—how are you able to do that?"

"Huh?" he glanced around and saw the entire room staring at him in a combination of awe and horror and a bit fear. "How did I do what?"

"How are you able to continuously cast a spell that should have you passed out on the floor fifty minutes ago?" she screamed at him, throwing up her hands.

He shrugged and turned back to thinking about what to do to Snape next. "Oh, is that all? For a second there I were asking how I could torture Snape like I have been."

"Oh, no, in fact I was wondering if I could have a turn?" she asked cutely, "Just one?"

"Sure, I'm done with him now. Go ahead and start a queue while I figure out what to do to the bastard next. Hm... Q?" Harry looked up at the ceiling and suddenly smirked. "Actually, yeah, go ahead and show everyone how to do the illusion spell. Ron, Ginny, I'm going to need your help, and you're the only Weasley's I've got right now."

"Sure thing Harry, what do you need?" Ginny piped up before Ron could say a word.

"A broom. Actually, Neville, you might want to get in on this..."

After everyone had had their turn with learning and casting the illusion spell once on Snape, Harry, Ron and Neville situated him at the top of the Astronomy Tower, making sure he was firmly in place, even as he was still unconscious from those last few rounds with the illusion spells. Harry couldn't resist one last shot at him.

"This is so wrong," Neville was shaking his head, trying not to be ill.

"Yes, yes it is wrong. Never do this to anyone that doesn't deserve it a thousand times over. And forgive them nine hundred and ninety nine times first," said Harry. "And if they bother you that thousandth time," he grinned, "send them to the moon." With that, he super-charged the charms empowering the broom to flight and the jerking start and sudden stretching pain woke Snape from unconsciousness with a scream that echoed away high overhead, and could still be heard when the broom up Snape's rectum broke a hundred meters.

"So... what do we do now?" asked Ron, still staring up at the speck rocketing away in the sky.

"We wait for him to come down and hope he survives," remarked Harry with a wide grin.

"Why would we want him to survive?" scoffed Ginny.

"Because if he does survive, he's going to really wish he hadn't when he finally lands. I have a few more things that I'd like to do to him before lunch," said Harry, handing the Omniculars to Neville, who was enjoying himself more than he thought he had a right to. "I'm going to go get all that set up. Coming Ginny?"

"Be right there Harry," she answered, using Ron's pair of Omniculars to keep an eye on the dot in the sky, "I just want to see if he'll break two thousand."

"I did kind of program the broom to turn one hundred eighty degrees and head straight down back to the castle when it hits ten thousand, but that'll take a while," he said. "I'll be down by the Lake if anyone needs me!"

As expected, Snape came crashing down near the castle, the broom even more tightly lodged as it had actually accelerated far beyond

the normal terminal velocity of an object of Snape's mass. Right before he would have crashed and no doubt been splattered into a red mess in the lake, the giant squid reached out with two tentacles, as Harry had asked it to do, and one grabbed the broom alone, letting speed and momentum dislodge it before tossing it aside to be burned to ashes and buried on consecrated soil, while the other tentacle almost gently caught the falling Potions Professor.

Snape, still conscious and regretting not being that big red mess in the lake right at that moment, tried to struggle and get away, or maybe even convince the squid to eat him. Harry wasn't sure, but he strangely suspected it was more of the latter than the former.

Instead the giant squid of Hogwarts tossed the wailing wizard to her boyfriend, who was waiting on the shore. A tentacle demon named Al.

The squid made several very emphatic, and Harry suspected rude and angry as well, gestures with all ten of her appendages. Her boyfriend, Al, almost looked queasy at what he was being asked to do, but Harry already knew she had him over a barrel and then some. She gestured one last final time, and then seemed to do the squid equivalent of crossing her arms and tapping her foot impatiently, just without actually crossing or tapping anything.

Al hesitated one last time, and then proceeded to rape Professor Snape in every orifice and with matching sexual organs necessary to complete the act successfully. Several times. Tentacle demons were very adaptable that way, it's why they were demons in the first place instead of just tentacle creatures or tentacle aliens. After Snape had 'given birth' to a full dozen demon offspring eggs, which continued raping their 'mother' in even more degraded and depraving ways, Al had finally had enough and went crying back to his girlfriend, sobbing like a little school girl, which was exactly who and what had gotten him into this trouble in the first place. He swore over and over again that he would never ever cheat on her again, no matter with who or what!

Harry, having left and only returned after the demon offspring had died out (they only last for a few minutes at a time unless given some extra power from their demon parent), whistled to himself and waved at the giant squid, who waved back, grateful to him for telling her about her boyfriend's infidelity and giving her the solution to the

problem as well. He was glad to have helped, and besides, Ravenclaws are even more of a rumor mill than the Hufflepuffs, and the Hufflepuffs know everything. While the Ravenclaws had known that the giant squid was female and had a boyfriend who was a tentacle demon that had been cheating on her with innocent schoolgirls and other human cosplay wet dreams, the Hufflepuffs had known his name, address, and how to get in touch with him.

He chuckled as he grabbed Snape by his greasy hair, the only part that Al and his offspring hadn't touched, making sure to wear dragon-hide gloves the whole time, and dragged him towards the forest where he had his next torture waiting for the Potions Professor.

"So that's the deal," concluded Harry to the centaurs. "You drag Snape around the forest for the rest of the day and don't let anyone or anything stop you, I'll clear out the Acromentula nest, and by tomorrow wizards give up all claim to the forest or any area designated owned by centaurs before dawn tomorrow. Did I miss anything?"

"You did not make a magical oath," Bane growled.

"And you did not swear on your warrior pride, so we're even," stated Harry with no emotion whatsoever. "Have the stars been telling you lot anything unusual lately?"

"Chaos," they all whispered.

"Anyone want to take a guess as to who or what is at the center of that chaos?" he offered. They all shifted nervously. "So whether or not I get the Ministry to comply to ridiculous land claims that none of you even care about doesn't really matter when tomorrow I may instead decide to make a deal with the Acromantulas instead of the centaurs... right?"

"Uh... right!" they all chorused and immediately took the broken Snape and started dragging him all throughout the Forbidden Forest, making sure that he hit every sharp outcropping of rocks on the way. A minute later a tornado landed in the middle of the Acromantula nests, driving them away from Hogwarts and the centaur lands, or just outright killing a large number of them. Except for Aragog, who was protected as a 'Friend of Hagrid'.

"Let's see, who else can I torture today?" Harry asked himself, still feeling quite a bit of unresolved anger.

Suddenly he smiled, and walked out the front gate before transforming into a falcon and flying to one of the local pubs in Hogsmeade and using their Floo to get to the Leaky Cauldron. From there, he walked to a video store he'd once seen when walking through London when Mister Weasley had escorted him to the Ministry of Magic for his trial. Hm... something else to get back at them for. He walked into the video store and asked to speak with the manager, who he then requested to 'pre-view' all of their children videos so he could know which one to get for his baby cousin, omitting the fact that his cousin was more a baby whale than just a baby. He also made sure to phrase his request in such a way that the manager and anybody listening would know that the videos were for him and that he was temporarily insane and libel to do anything if he didn't get his way. Harry incidentally started a trend with every kid in the store, coming or going, sitting down right beside him as he sat through every video tape of Barney the Purple Dinosaur, the Teletubbies, every Nick Jr. TV show on video, and the Care Bears, My Little Pony, and dozens of other programs, all playing at once on the store's big wall of TVs. Half an hour to forty-five minutes later, Harry was back at Hogwarts and gleefully replaying all of those scenes through his mind again and again, focusing on the pain in his scar and on sending these images to Voldemort's mind.

He kept it up for the rest of the day and was rewarded with a vision-headache free day.

"Yes, hello?" spoke Harry into the telephone. "Is this Child Services for Little Whinging? My name is Harry Potter, and I'd like it if you could answer some of my questions regarding how things work in your neck of the woods..."

Harry hung up the phone and smiled with righteous vengeance as he thought about what he'd set in motion with a three minute phone call.

Less than half an hour later, Vernon Dursley was publicly arrested and fired and had his picture put in the paper all at the same time. Moments after that, Petunia Dursley was seen running and crying into her pristine home and locking all the doors and covering all the

windows. Rumor had it that she would never be seen again, but you know how rumor is.

At Smeltings, a number of constables did a "random" search of one of the dorm rooms and before they'd even finished with the footlocker, or had started on the closet and what they found under the bed, in the mattress, and stuffed inside several pillows, Dudley Dursley was pulled out of class in front of all his mates, roughed up a little, handcuffed, and made to sit outside the Main Office on a dunce stool where everyone could see him during the class change. Rumor had it he was out there the rest of the day and wasn't even allowed to get up for anything until the constables drug him away at night, after the school had closed for the day.

"Harry! What have you done?" cried Mr. Weasley as he watched the chaos spread throughout the Ministry.

Harry shrugged and replied, "Well I had to put them some where, and I wasn't about to let them pick their own home in a muggle neighborhood."

They watched as the displaced Acromantula tribe of the Forbidden Forest scurried this way and that through the busy corridors of the Ministry of Magic. That it was busy with hundreds of screaming day workers and Aurors trying to round up the magical creatures made no difference to Harry.

"What do you think Aragog, do you want the Minister's Office, at the top level, or the dungeons at the bottom level?" asked Harry with a sadistic grin.

The giant spider found he actually had to think about his answer.

Harry browsed through the Department of Mysteries, ignoring and being ignored by all the Unspeakables working diligently on whatever it was they worked on. On his way to the Hall of Prophecies, he stopped beside the cabinet full of Time Turners and considered. Finally he shook his head, saying, "Nyeaahh!"

To be quite honest he had his fill of time magic for the time being and he wasn't looking to add to it anytime soon.

He grabbed the Prophecy about him and Voldemort off the shelf and on his way back out actually took the time to listen to it the whole way through. He smashed it on the street outside the Ministry as the Visitor's, Main, and Employee entrances all were being destroyed by localized tornadoes behind him.

He really should finish up on those exercises to control his elemental magic, he thought as he took the Leaky Cauldron's Floo back to Hogsmeade. Cool as it was to use tornadoes to destroy everything he wanted to destroy, he didn't want to destroy everything!

Oh well, that was for later. Today he was temporarily insane and that entitled him to a vacation from work. Even if it was necessary, responsible work that he wanted to do. Especially if it was necessary, responsible work!

"Hm, really regretting letting Umbridge off the hook so easily this morning," Harry grumbled as he lathered Draco Malfoy, Vincent Crabbe, and Gregory Goyle's underwear-clad bodies with Babylonian Bee nectar before he dumped them in the hole in the ground he'd dug right next to Hagrid's Magic Fire Ant farm. Of course this was Hagrid we're talking about, and magic of course means magic, so the "ant farm" was actually three giant mounds that were the tip of the ant colony's underground home. And Magic Fire Ants are magic's answer to the genus and two hundred fifty six species therein of *Solenopsis*, except they're actually made from fire and as a defense mechanism can explode in a small fireball without actually dying. More ants there are, bigger the fireball. Oh, and they're also carnivorous towards humans as well, magical humans in particular. Best way to attract them and start a feeding frenzy; Babylonian Bee nectar.

"Yeah, darn shame that I let Umbridge get away with just dying by surprise. I'll have to fix that tomorrow," he explained to the Sexy Sexy Witches that had helped him kidnap, strip and bury the three idiots of Slytherin House.

"So tell us, Potter," asked Daphne as she walked away while the Ant Farm behind them literally exploded in activity, "how is it you're getting away with all this? You do know there are going to be consequences to these actions, don't you?"

Harry shrugged and asked in reply, "Answer me this and you'll have your own answer; what if there were no tomorrow? What if there were some kind of accident with some unknown time magic that caused the day to continuously repeat itself, forcing time to run in a loop?"

Both girls blinked, and then grinned and looped their arms with Harry's on either side of him and sauntered off smiling, all three of them happily ignoring the sounds of three very stupid and guileless snakes die screaming behind them.

"How?" cried Ron, "How? How? How? HOW? HOW?"

"I did mention I'm kind of stuck in a time loop, didn't I?" pointed out Harry, even as he finished filling out another questionnaire from Hermione, it had been the fifth in a row and had taken him exactly five seconds to finish filling them out for her. It had taken him the same amount of time to beat Ron in three moves in Wizarding Chess. "I also have kinda spent a lot of time in the Ravenclaw dorms, and they have fifteen different books on chess play in their private library."

"But... how?" begged the redhead. He'd never been beaten in less than twenty-five moves since he was a child, and during the past two years, there was hardly anyone left in the castle or at home that could beat him at all! If he had been aware of it, he probably would have entered into a professional chess tournament by now!

"Here... here... and here," Harry moved the pieces on the board, showing where they started at and where he moved them to. Ron knew his own moves well enough, but now he could see what Harry had done clearly and without being too focused on his next few moves. Of course he quickly devised a strategy to counter this new tactic of his best friend.

"Again!"

"Here, here, and here," Harry moved three different pieces in completely different ways, while making the same moves Ron had been planning on making exactly so.

"But... HOW?" he cried out.

"I've got twenty-nine different strategies that can beat you in less than five moves. And fifty and more counters to your counters, depending on which ones I show you first. It was some lonely nights after Cho threw me out those first few weeks," remarked Harry with a small tinge of regret.

"HOW!" Hermione yelled in his ear.

In response, Harry handed her fifteen other sheets of parchment that he had written out ahead of time. His friends could be so predictable, it was very sad really.

Albus Dumbledore and Cornelius Fudge walked in side-by-side into the Great Hall of Hogwarts. Actually, if one looked closely enough, they would see that Dumbledore was actually taking the lead. They had a full contingent of Aurors and the members of the Order of the Phoenix that were already Aurors behind them. Oh, plus Hagrid.

As soon as people saw the Headmaster, they started cheering, an immense and unfathomable relief filling them in his wake. Hardly anyone even noticed the Minister, even though he was the one waving to all their cheers and catcalls.

Harry noticed, however.

"Well, well, well, this is something I never expected to see," said Harry as the Headmaster and the Minister walked straight up to him. He had been playing a round of 7 Card with his girls. Sexist, yes he knew, but he genuinely felt that way about them. He folded and signaled the others to clean up the game.

"Harry, my boy, what have you done?" asked Dumbledore morosely, and a bit condescending too.

"I'm stuck in a time loop. Neville was generous enough to point out that means there are no consequences beyond today's. Time magic thing," he shrugged, getting his wand out and breathing in the magic of the air around him.

"Harry . . . such things are—impossible," the old wizard assured him.

Harry pointed his wand casually over his shoulder. A jet of blue light shot out faster than anyone could blink or even turn their heads. The

rubble that had been covering Umbridge's decaying corpse, (no one had bothered to dig her out and wouldn't until she started to smell anyway), lifted and even repaired the hole in the ceiling and reconstituted into Dumbledore's throne-chair.

Dumbledore stared. The spell had been cast by a boy that was still in the middle of taking his OWLs, not yet sixteen, and it had been done when he wasn't looking at what he was casting at, without moving the wand in the prescribed manner the spell required, and he had not been saying or even overly thinking the spell at all. It had also been cast at a speed with sufficient power that spoke of superb control over his magic.

"However I'll not be the first to admit that even I do not know everything," said Dumbledore.

"Albus, we, uh, we really have some—some matters to attend to," Fudge interrupted and pointed not to subtly as the decaying corpse at the front of the Great Hall.

"Ah, yes Cornelius, I was just getting to that. For the time being why don't you just stand back and await my signal while I speak with Harry and attempt to resolve this peaceably. Thank you Cornelius," Dumbledore waved the Minister back into the crowd of Auror's like he was just another of the man's students.

All the children, especially those that knew what animosity lay between Dumbledore and the Minister, witnessed this with shocked, almost betrayed eyes. Harry and his friends felt this betrayal the most deeply, some more than others.

"Care to explain—?" Harry started to ask in anger, but surprisingly Hermione beat him to the punch.

"Professor? WHAT is the MEANING of THIS?" she screeched, pointing at him and Fudge.

"Miss Granger, a great deal has occurred today, and I assure you, I mean to rectify that here and now," Dumbledore assured her.

"Yeah, I have had a busy morning, haven't I?" remarked Harry with derisive sarcasm.

It just so happened that Dumbledore and Fudge had walked into the Great Hall during the middle of lunch. And Harry had yet to finish living out this first day from when Neville gave him that great advice. He looked forward to seeing how much of what he'd done so far got undone tomorrow, when it was today again. Although he planned to keep torturing Voldemort with those kid shows for the rest of eternity if he had to.

"Harry, please, tell me what it is that you have done," Dumbledore stepped forward, "Perhaps it's not too late. We can still—"

"Still what, Professor?" Hermione interrupted once more. Twice in one day, Harry was impressed. He wondered how much of her new found confidence came from his admission that they were in a time loop along with Neville's advice that no tomorrow meant no consequences. "Still in time to repair the damage to your plan?"

Harry stopped and frowned. Plan? What... plan!

"Plan?" Harry repeated, his voice no longer sarcastically carefree. The whole room shivered.

"I didn't think anything of it until today," Hermione told him, but keeping her eyes on Dumbledore, "But I've noticed a lot of inconsistencies over the years, Harry. I've taken note of everything, and a lot of it never made any sense to me. Professor Dumbledore just kept explaining it all away, and I believed him! And then he shows up with the Minister, the Minister who was feuding with and trying to undermine everything about Dumbledore, and yet here they are together. With the Minister at the Professor's beck and call."

Harry glanced back and forth between Dumbledore and Fudge, noticing how Fudge skirted around the back side of Dumbledore, a great deal like one other rat and his master.

"Miss Granger, I'm not sure what you're talking about, the Minister contacted me, to inform me of what it is Harry had done. Releasing dangerous dark creatures into the heart of the Ministry of Magic?" the Professor made his case. "And the rumors about Madam Umbridge seem to have been true. How regrettable."

"Auror's, ARREST POTTER!" Fudge hysterically screamed, pointing with his wand.

Dumbledore shook his head, but did not seem surprised in the least. "Cornelius, that was not the signal, but the damage has been done, it is time to repair what can be repaired. Perhaps I can discover what it is that has happened to Mister Potter to grant him such dark and unnatural powers..."

"NO!" Hermione screamed and placed herself between the Aurors and Harry. She wasn't the only one as three quarters of the school... no, make that the whole school rallied around him, wands out and pointing at the adults. Harry reached up to take Hermione by the shoulder, but something caught his ear. He tilted his head and listened.

"I'm sorry Professor, but we can't let you do that to Harry!" Ron defended his friend.

"And none of us are going to let you take him!" Ernie Macmillan warned, the entire House of Hufflepuff behind him, and between Harry Potter and those that wanted to take him.

Albus sighed and shook his head. "I do apologize children, but I believe you all have been greatly deceived. Sadly, I do not see us resolving this solely with our words, as there are many things afoot that children simply cannot understand. Therefore, I'm afraid I must insist you all allow us to pass and return to your seats. Now."

The word was said with no true power behind it and at normal volume, but a shiver that rivaled that which Harry's tone inflicted ran up and down all the students' spines. Moments later, loud thundering steps were heard, echoing off the walls in every direction. Someone screamed and the screams got louder. Nobody could move.

Not because of fear, but instead due to a sticking charm that had been placed on every solid surface, one that no one could fight or get away from. People even stuck to each other if they weren't careful! Moments after this discovery was made, the source of the thundering footsteps was revealed, the empty suits of armor all around the school had come to life and were making a perimeter around the Great Hall. None of them had drawn their weapons, but their menacing presence was enough by itself. Two of the hollow knights separated from the rest, stepping around the unfrozen

Aurors, Minister and Headmaster and began to physically pick students up and place them in seats at the tables until a clear path was made to Harry. Hermione and Ron fought the hardest, but there was nothing they could do against the suits of armor and their spells were either useless, or deflected by Professor Dumbledore placing a silent Protego around the two armors.

Finally, the way was clear and the Aurors moved to step forward, but Harry tilted his head the other way and a strong wind came from around him. At first it was almost nothing but the closer the Aurors got, the stronger the wind became until they were all blown back or to the ground. Not a single person other than the Aurors was even touched by the wind.

"Hm, really do need to read up on Elemental Magic," muttered Harry. "I complete the first three exercises, begin the fourth but don't finish and all this stuff still starts happening? I really need to start researching some actual spells to use with this. Hey Hermione, after we're done here, I'm going to go to the Room of Requirement to get a book on Elemental Magic. Would you mind helping me study it?"

"Um, Harry, that may be a bit difficult right now!" Hermione exclaimed. "They're trying to arrest you!"

"No Harry, we're trying to help you. For the Greater Good," said Dumbledore.

"Whose greater good?" snapped Harry.

"I'm sorry?" the Headmaster was taken aback.

"Whose greater good? Whose greater good was it that I sent to my mother's sister, who hated her and I'm quite sure the feeling was entirely mutual? Whose greater good was it that my godfather was sent to prison without a trial or any chance to defend himself? Whose greater good is it that I have to be the one to face Voldemort? And what does it even MEAN NEITHER CAN LIVE WHILE THE OTHER SURVIVES?"

Dumbledore's face lost all trace of smiling grandfather or twinkly-eyed old Merlin-like wizard. The man who stood before Harry now was the man who defeated a Dark Lord in the darkest time of recent human history, the most powerful magic user of this century, the

Leader of the Light, where the light burns anything that lay under it for too long.

"We will have to have the Obliviators on standby Cornelius. See that it is done," he ordered.

"Yes Al—Professor. At once Professor," the Minister actually bowed before scrambling back through the crowd to get to the nearest Floo.

Harry frowned. Why did this seem so... familiar?

He looked around, saw Hermione's tear-streaked and frightened face. He saw Ron's hard glare and the veins in his neck as he strained to escape the sticking charm that held him flat to the table. He saw Hagrid, behind Dumbledore, his face bowed, his eyes shadowed and hidden with shame. He had lived through this before. But not during the resets.

He blinked and instead of the Great Hall saw himself in 4 Privet Drive, with the same people, except for the Minister. The summer after his First Year, when the Dursley's locked him away in his room and Ron and his brothers had to fly him out with their family's car. But... Hermione.

She was a muggle. She lived in the London suburbs, same as he did. Why had they never...? Had they really never gone over to each other's houses? Had she really just left him alone all those summers? She said she and her parents had gone to France that summer... When Beauxbaton's had been here, he'd never heard her speak a word of French, and he never knew Hermione to not want to learn everything she could about a subject when it came up. If her family went to France for any vacation, he'd lay down money that she would be fluent in the language before the plane touched down.

Replace Hagrid with Professor Snape, and take out Ron, and he saw himself with Hermione exactly the same, with her being held between two frightened people, a man and a woman, her parents... He recalled seeing a TV in the background, showing Sirius's picture during a news report... Dumbledore was still there, looking the same as now.

There was more, but... why couldn't he . . . remember...?

"Obliviators," he cursed the word even as he said it. "That spell should be even more Unforgivable than the ones used against mine and Neville's parents."

"Harry, you never understand what must be done, what has to be done for the Greater Good..." Dumbledore was talking. Harry ignored him. Instead, he listened to another voice. A voice he heard on the wind.

"Now, come along quietly Harry, no more of that dangerous dark magic you've been abusing," coddled the old man. He stepped forward and a flame appeared in his hands. "You wouldn't want to hurt yourself, would you, Harry? Or those you care about? Your friends, Miss Granger and Mister Weasley?" He casually held the flame like a coin flipping through his fingers.

Bastard.

And a Fire Element natural to boot. Wind was weak against fire in direct confrontation, he'd learned that much from all his studying before performing the ritual. Harry was at a bigger disadvantage than he'd thought. The voice whispered something else.

Then again...

"You know what I have to say to you, Professor?" Harry cheerfully remarked.

"And what might that be, Harry?" asked Albus, expecting some childish insult or derogatory name.

Harry spoke a name.

The windows and the roof exploded. Wind roared throughout the Great Hall. And a small tornado formed itself and held gently over Harry's right hand. He had pocketed his wand shortly after Dumbledore stuck the floors and called in the knights. Besides, what he held now was infinitely more powerful than anything his wand could do for him right at this moment.

"The Queen of the Sylphs," Harry held out the tornado. "The Lesser Spirit of Wind, Air and Sky. Do you know much about Sylphs, Professor?"

Everyone in the room, except for Harry, was on the ground. The pressure of the air was so much that hardly anyone could breathe, and not even Dumbledore's skill and power with magical fire could do anything about it. In fact he dare not use it, for fear of drawing the spirit's attention.

How was this possible? Dumbledore raged. He's only fifteen years old! It took me decades to learn the name of the Lesser Spirit of Fire!

And, the Leader of the Light realized with a small measure of triumph, he had more recently learned the name of the Medium Spirit of Fire!

But it wasn't time to play that card just yet.

"I'm sure Hermione could tell us quite a bit about them, but nothing you didn't already know, isn't that right, sir?" Harry growled at the prostrate man, the tornado in his hand became a bit more violent. "Sylphs are wind spirits, fey born on the wind with songs that can stop time itself, or destroy a mountain in hours. They're also immune to the effects of fire. But here's something not even you knew, sir."

Harry knelt down and looked into those twinkling blue eyes, hiding nothing, showing his full hand as it were, "When you call upon the Queen of the Sylphs, she herself doesn't respond. No, what she does, instead, is send one million Sylphs to judge whether or not the one calling is even worth her attention. If he, or she, is found not worthy, then the Sylphs take the foolish mortal away and hide them for the rest of eternity, for the amusement of their queen. To be quite honest with you, Dumbledore, I'm not seeing the downside to that."

Dumbledore's eyes went wide with fear and recrimination. The fool! All his plans would be ruined!

"Now, your going to answer all my questions, Dumbledore, or I'm going to let these pretties destroy Hogwarts. Which is it going to be?" Harry gave him the ultimatum.

"I doubt you would... ever destroy your... home here, Harry," gasped Dumbledore.

"For all I know right now, sir, you stole me away from my home year after year to put me with those monsters, who have all no doubt been arrested by Child Services by now," said Harry.

"A... small matter," Dumbledore shook his head, waving off what Harry said as though it didn't matter.

"Not really making your case here for why I shouldn't have the Sylphs take every student of Hogwarts and leave you holding the bag here Dumbledore," Harry growled, his face a mask of anger and rage.

Dumbledore's eyes went wide again.

"Yeah," Harry nodded, "When I said destroy Hogwarts, I meant the true Hogwarts, not just this building. An entire generation of young wizards and witches taken and hidden away. And who knows, maybe I'll even make the contract that so long as I get to walk in the Real World once every year, they'll get every new generation coming in until there aren't anymore. We'd all still be alive and blissed out of our minds, but we'd also be out of your control. And as for Voldemort, well he can have what's left. I can't imagine the Wizarding World lasting much more than a century past this point, if even that long. And that's provided you don't go around killing each other and starting wars with other countries!"

Harry held up the tornado, and asked one last time, "Now, are you going to answer my questions, or do we end our negotiations here?"

Dumbledore spoke a name.

The Sylphs in Harry's hand screamed in fear and anger. They were immune to lesser fire, and they matched their rivals, the Lesser Spirit of Fire, but the Medium Spirit of Fire was something else entirely.

Help Us Wizard

He heard them calling, and knowing they would not understand his words, he breathed, trying to turn his words into the same magic of the air that he'd been breathing in and out all day. It seemed to work.

"What do you need of me?" he asked.

Your Power

This voice was different. It was the one that had whispered her own name into his ear, meant as a tease, but he had actually listened. As far as the Lesser Spirit of Wind was concerned, he had passed her Trial, but now a greater threat loomed. This young wizard was not yet ready to face the Medium Spirit of Fire!

I Need Your Power Wizard. Make A Contract!

Harry considered, and spoke, holding the twister between both hands now, even as Dumbledore stood before him, his body filled with the power of the Medium Spirit of Fire. Fawkes had shown up as well and perched atop the older wizard's shoulders, looking bigger than Harry had ever seen him as.

"Harry James Potter, The One Who Lived," Harry's body was rocked and he almost passed out again, but he held on, "Offers a Contract to the Lesser Spirit of Wind, Air and Sky." He spoke the name once more. "I give all my power for the rest of this day in exchange for aiding me in my times of need."

Laughter trickled throughout the wind around him, even as the tornado in his hands grew infinitely larger. The bargain was struck and the contract was sealed.

Careful Wording There Wizard, If We Were More Devious, We Would Take All Your Power At Noon Every One Of Your Remaining Days In This Loop Of Space And Time. As My Cousins And Sisters And Mother Need You Still, We Shall Only Take Your Power This One Time. A Wizard's Full Power For Even Half A Day Is Quite Potent. Not So Much To Our Sisters Or Mother, You Understand?

Harry acknowledged that he understood, but he could barely stand and said nothing.

There are two ways a Lesser Spirit can either match or successfully combat a higher ranked Spirit. One is to "Go Dark" as it were and for one day they are given the power of the Major Spirit with no restraints and then after that they become a bottom feeding demon of some kind. The other, is to make Contracts, Magical Binding Contracts, with Wizards and Humans and other creatures with

magic that they can use to boost themselves. The Full Power of a wizard, even a young one, is nothing to sneeze at. Normally the Lesser Spirit will ask for Half their Power for a few hours or even a day. It lets the Wizard keep his magic, and it boosts them to a full level above where they were and pays for the cost at the same time.

The Full Power of a wizard, however, could actually make a Lesser Spirit a match for a Medium Spirit, as that wizard, for whatever amount of time, has given up his ability to use magic at all during that time. The sacrifice, as much as the power, is enough to actually put such an outclassed match-up on equal footing. And depending on the wizard, it may even tip the scales in one direction over the other.

"Harry!" cried Dumbledore with dismay, "What have you done?"

"Made a contract with the Lesser Spirit of Wind, why? What are you going to do about it?" replied Harry, barely heard over the noise of two elemental spirits being in the same room.

"I have my Familiar Harry," Dumbledore warned him, "No matter how much of your power you have bartered away, it will make no difference in the end. Let us stop this before it is too late!"

"I gave my Full Power for the rest of the day," answered Harry.

Dumbledore's face of shock was so good, Harry wished he had a camera, if only the picture wouldn't disappear at the end of the day.

"FAWKES!" Dumbledore screamed and suddenly the phoenix and the Medium Spirit of Fire were one and the same. And then Dumbledore was absorbed as well and Harry idly wondered just how much of the muggle world was Dumbledore aware of, as if you replaced the old wizard with a hot redhead in gold and green spandex, you had one of the most classic and well known scenes from comic book history.

"*YOU CANNOT MATCH OUR POWER NOW!*" the fused being spoke with trembling power, "*GIVE IN AND SURRENDER YOURSELF!*"

"Hm?" Harry tilted his head and listened. He listened very carefully.

He spoke a name.

And then, while the air went still and the wind went silent, Harry called over to his best friends, who were now free to move. They approached, cautiously, but the floor-to-ceiling tornado in his hands did not touch them, despite how it was oddly silent.

"Guys, I'm sorry I brought you into this. I should have just told you to run," Harry apologized.

"No worries mate," Ron assured him. "Now, uh, what are ya going to do about this, because I've never seen the Professor this angry. Ever."

"And how are you doing this Harry?" Hermione wanted to know. Both boys shot her a look. "Right, later," she admonished herself. "So Harry, you do have a plan, don't you?"

"Sort of," he sheepishly admitted. "I've just summoned the Medium Spirit of Wind, Air and Sky. She's just waiting for me to complete the Contract, but I've already given my Full Power to the Lesser Spirit of Air here. I've got nothing left to give, because if I give anything more, the time loop is going to reset."

"So... what do you need from us Harry?" asked Ron.

"Just for today, right?" asked Hermione, nervous and worried. She had already figured out what he was going to ask him and was hoping to minimize the consequence.

"Just for the rest of today. By midnight all your magic would be back. And Ron... I need for you two to give the same thing I just gave. Willingly. If you say no, I'll find another way. I'm not going to risk—"

"I'll do it," Ron said immediately. "I, uh, Ronald Bilius Weasley, do hereby grant Harry James Potter—"

"The One Who Lived," Harry whispered.

"—The One Who Lived, my Full Power to make a Contract with the... Medium... Spirit... of Wind," Ron stuttered a bit as Hermione helped him out by mouthing the words for him to say. And then suddenly he

was feeling too weak to do much of anything but stay standing and lean against his best friend.

"Hermione Jean Granger gives to Harry James Potter—The One Who Lived—my Full Power to make a Contract with the Medium Spirit of Wind!" She almost passed out, but clung to her only real friends and stayed conscious long enough to see what happened next.

You Have True Friends Wizard. Cherish Them. The Contract Is Made. I And All My Kin Shall Protect You And Yours For The Rest Of Your Days, No Matter How Many Of Them There Are.

The Medium Spirit of Wind's voice was deeper and resonated throughout every molecule of air around them. Even Hermione and Ron heard the voice this time, it was impossible to miss.

And then another voice spoke, one that Harry would never ever forget and one as infinitely diverse and powerful and gentle and hot and cold as all the wind and air and sky itself.

Impressive

The Major Spirit of Wind, Air and Sky had been watching and was now speaking.

Great Things Were Expected Of You, And A Great Thing You Have Accomplished. You Have Learned All My Family's Names In A Single Hour Of A Single Day. You Have Proven Your Worth And Have Earned My Name, Wizard.

My Name Is

A gentle whisper flew past Harry's ears and the name was etched directly into his soul. He would never, could never forget that name or any of her family's names.

Harry spoke the name.

Hogwarts exploded. And a flaming phoenix was seen ripped to shreds by a windstorm that looked a lot like an angry mother defending one of her children.

AN: For the record, everything that happened in this chapter happened during a single reset. Harry has not yet even finished this one day as of yet. Busy day, huh?

Chapter 8: Dumbledore's Lies

Harry woke up and immediately flew out the window of Gryffindor tower as a sparrow and once he was high enough over the castle he shifted to his dragon form and made his way out of Hogwarts as fast as he could fly, and then made his way to London. Specifically to Number Twelve Grimmauld Place. Once over London, he shifted to a red-tailed hawk, found the building he wanted and landed on the front stoop before changing back into his human form. He appeared on the door step, just inside the Fidelius Protections with a rush of air, still in his pajamas. He snapped his fingers and the wind around him popped as a sonic boom explosion ripped through the area. People ran screaming, cars with windshields cracked or busted windows as they hightailed it out of the neighborhood, and locked their doors and hid in their basements.

When it came to Dumbledore, he was through being subtle.

He could vaguely hear scrambling going on inside, and he decided to give them about a minute's time to prepare whatever defenses they were going to need. Besides, it gave him time to prepare his own defenses. Albeit, his weren't exactly genius level, he was just as confident they would work . . . against the Order. He placed a generic Protego charm over each piece of clothing and then his entire body. He then went on to place three Protego Maximus spells on his torso, one on his face, and another on his off-hand. Then he blasted the door in.

He held up his shielded hand and it immediately stopped or deflected over two dozen spells, and still it held. He was glad he'd taken the time to work on his magical control some more the night/morning before, especially in regards to battle spells

After the castle had exploded and Dumbledore was taken out 'yesterday', he'd gone to where the Room of Requirement should have been in the ruins and 'required' the Castle be reborn. The Major Spirit of Wind helped out the ancient structure and it wasn't even an hour after it had fallen that the majestic castle was back in place, as good as new. Unfortunately there was nothing to be done with his, Hermione and Ron's magic until after midnight the 'end of the day', but he went ahead and showed Hermione the books he'd been privy to and let her be impressed that he was studying elemental magic and what it was he had done exactly. After

midnight however, he started in on his magic control exercises like a madman until he could maintain a shield charm for no less than ten full minutes with constant bombardment with anything other than the Unforgivables. He even completed the last of the Elemental Magic exercises.

It certainly helped out here. He stepped across the threshold and tried to peer through the dust, but if he couldn't see anything, which certainly meant that no one could see and identify him. He kept his shields up.

He walked down the hall towards the main hallway and the door to the kitchen, being bombarded with spellfire the whole way, until the dust finally settled and they saw whom they were firing at. They being Mad-Eye Moody, Tonks, Shacklebolt, Hagrid, Remus, Sirius, Mr and Mrs. Weasley, and a man he vaguely recalled as wearing a top hat and bowing to him once on the streets in London when he was a boy. As they had never been introduced, Harry did not know his name.

"H-Harry?" Mrs. Weasley's voice shook. He ignored it for the moment, instead asking for the information that he needed to be done with this place as soon as possible. He needed to do this, he didn't necessarily want to do it, he needed to.

"Where is he? I need to have some... words with him."

None of them answered or reacted, so Harry just frowned and held his wand in front of him, not pointed at any one or any thing, but it got their attention. "Where is he?" he asked once more.

Sirius pointed at the kitchen, and they all scrambled away as Harry stalked forward and made his way through the door to the kitchen. Albus Dumbledore was seated alone at the head of the table, his wand before him, just laying there on the table. Harry had no doubt that the manipulative bastard could have that in his hands shooting stunning, binding, and disabling spells in less than half a heartbeat.

"Harry?" asked the ex-Headmaster, "You were not who I was expecting."

"No, I imagine not," remarked Harry. "Given that I'm supposed to be in school, shouldn't be able to leave school and make it here to

London at all, and have no reason to want to question you about the times you've Obliviated me, my friends, their families, and what exactly it means that neither shall live while the other survives!"

Harry wasn't sure which had been the worst shock for the former school teacher, that he'd 'remembered' the times he'd been Obliviated, although it was more that he had been Obliviated, or that he knew the prophecy.

"I also know about this whole... sham you have going with the Minister of Magic. I don't know the details of it, yet. But I want Umbridge gone. Put Snape or Flitwick or even Madam Pince in charge, I don't care. But you get Umbridge out of that school. After we talk about what else you've done in my life." Harry sat down at the opposite end of the table, also putting his wand on the table, business end facing Dumbledore of course. He could cast remotely, but had only done it a few times, having focused more on building towards wandless casting for years now.

"Harry, I'm not sure what—"

"DO NOT lie to me!" he shouted. "I may only be beginning my Occlumency training, and I have yet to start learning Legilimency, which Snape is all too eager to practice on me, often. But I think I'm beginning to know when you're hiding something from me, Albus. And if you ever want me to trust you again, from this day forward, no matter what or when, you will tell me everything. Holding nothing back. If you do, I'm gone and I'll even swear on my magic with an Unbreakable Vow to every witch and wizard I meet and can talk into undertaking it, that I will never, ever trust you or do anything you or any of your agents say to do ever again. No matter what. And I'm pretty sure I can get Moody out there, who is reading my lips right now, to officiate with every other member of the Order right here and now."

"Harry... I will answer your questions," Dumbledore answered quickly, "but please, may I know what has happened?"

"I'll answer that only when I'm convinced you've answered all of my questions," said Harry, eyes and tone hard. He asked the first question, staring into Dumbledore's eyes the whole time, "Did you, or any of your people, or anyone that you're even remotely aware of,

Obliviate me, Hermione, or Ron since Hagrid first gave me my letter?"

Dumbledore frowned, genuine sadness and remorse showing in his eyes. He then nodded his gray head and said, "Yes."

Harry struggled to control his temper. The very air around him heated up as he breathed heavier, causing wind to rattle the pots, pans, and other kitchen items around them. The noise broke Harry out of his mood and he took a calming breath. Cool air embraced him, like gentle cold compress held to his forehead by the school nurse. In grade school and at Hogwarts, the school nurse was the only one to ever take care of him whenever he was sick or injured therefore the only comparison he had.

"When? How many times?" he demanded to know.

"Harry..." Dumbledore tried to calm him. Harry's eyes shut and he repeated the question at a near shout.

"Four times," the former Headmaster answered regrettably. "At the end of your First Year, you woke up and witnessed something... unfortunate. That was why I was there when you awoke a second time. Again, later that very summer, you had been spending time with Miss Granger and her family. Professor McGonagall told me and some rather rash decisions were made, decisions I came to regret after the fact, but they were made and now we must live with them I'm afraid. The next time I believe was during the summer between your Second and Third Years, shortly around the time your... um, yes I believe her name was Marge, came to visit." Dumbledore had been careful not to note the woman as any relation to Harry, he seemed quite a bit on edge.

"The Minister insisted that your memories be modified somewhat, but I believe it was the weekend after she first arrived, you sent a desperate plea to your friends to 'come rescue you' as Mister Weasley put it. Miss Granger and young Mister Weasley along with his brothers arrived that Saturday and it turned into quite the affair from what I was told in the aftermath. You were all sent home, as it were. The Minister paid off the Weasley's for the trouble, and I believe your memories of that day are of spending the day in the garden."

"The Weasley's would never—!" Harry started to protest, but a seed of doubt had been planted.

"Of course you are right," Dumbledore quickly agreed. "Which is why they too had their memories modified. Instead of getting a summons from the Auror's on the scene, Arthur's memory had him receiving notification that he had won the thousand galleons prize. And instead of receiving the same summons from their home, Molly remembers it as Arthur calling to inform him of what they'd won. The rest of you merely had their memories Obliviated and they explained it away as over sleeping or in other rational ways."

"You said four," Harry's voice was tight, showing how much restraint he was employing right then.

"Yes," Dumbledore sighed and nodded his head. "The only other time that I am aware of was during your Fourth Year, the night of and after the Yule Ball. It was handled quietly."

"What was handled quietly?" growled Harry between clenched teeth.

"It had nothing to do with Miss Granger or Mister Krum, I assure you Harry," the older wizard made calming gestures with his hands, keeping them well away from his own wand. "Nor with either of your or Mister Weasley's dates for the evening. Rather... it was between you and Miss Delacour. I never heard all of the details, but Madame Maxime did inform me that a... private matter had erupted between yourself and your fellow Triwizard Champion of the time... and that both you and she had been Obliviated of the incident and there was nothing more to be done about it. Seeing as there was nothing untoward you and she in future interactions, and that neither of you seemed damaged in any way, I allowed the matter to pass without any further attention towards it."

Harry frowned, remembering nothing past Ron and Hermione fighting that night and going to bed. What happened between him and Fleur that they both had to be obliviated?

He sighed, some of his anger quelled in the face of Dumbledore's genuine, or so well acted it may as well be genuine, regret and remorse, but not all of it.

"All right, Albus. You've been straight with me so far," Harry acknowledged. "But that doesn't make any of it right. And I have more questions. How much of my life has been controlled by you, or people that worked for you? How much of what I thought was genuine in my life so far has been a sham, like what is going on now between you and the Minister?"

"Harry, I—!" Dumbledore tried to speak, but Harry shouted over him.

"No more lies, damnit! I want the truth! How much of my life, since the night my parents were murdered, has been a fabrication just so you can treat me as your Golden Boy and the Order's mascot against Voldemort and his Death Eaters? The truth!"

"Harry, I do not know what it is you are talking about specifically!" the older wizard shouted over his student this time around. "But I have never done anything to make your life a, a sham as you put it!"

"You could call to the Minister right this very second and he would show up, toadying as always. I know it. I've seen it. Whatever reason you have for making Voldemort think you and Fudge are on opposite sides, I really don't care right now. I want two things from you right now, Albus! One is, Umbridge out of Hogwarts. For good. Today even. And the second is the truth. One call from you to the Minister and you're back with all your power and respect and people will turn right around and agree with everything you have to say all over again. What I want to know is, how many other times has something just like it been done, all for my benefit, huh?"

Dumbledore frowned, mulling things over, and that threat Harry had made earlier still hanging over his head. He couldn't risk that, not even if every single one of his remaining and alternate plans regarding Harry's future had to fall apart, he could not wager it on losing Harry's trust in so permanent a fashion. If Harry made that Unbreakable Vow, all was lost, there would be nothing that Dumbledore could do at any point that could fix something like that.

So be it then.

"I knew about Quirrel before the Welcoming Feast of your First Year," he admitted, his expression and tone a mystery to Harry now. Whether it was regret or anger at having to admit to this, the younger wizard couldn't tell. "I knew what Gilderoy Lockhart had

done the moment I met him, and still I hired him. I knew about the Basilisk from my own days at school and I never told anyone it was there, nor did I inform the then-Headmaster of it being there even after Myrtle had died and Riddle had framed Hagrid. I knew of a way to remove you from the Triwizard Tournament, which would have been valid up until the day before the First Task, and I did not because I wanted to draw out whoever had placed you in the Tournament in the first place. I have never been able to read Alastor's mind to any successful degree, and given that my old friend had turned into a recluse during the intervening years, I ignored any peculiarities as merely losing touch and not knowing him as well as I used to. And... yes, from the moment that you first heard us arguing outside the Hospital Wing, the Minister has been behaving and reacting as I have asked him to, in order to draw Voldemort and his forces into a false sense of security. The Minister has actually been increasing funding and preparations in the Law Enforcement training and recruiting, as well as taking the Dementors off duty from Azkaban and making private and secure meetings between foreign heads of state and security to prepare for the worst-case scenario."

"You skipped a year," Harry accused.

"At no point had I known, or been informed that Peter Pettigrew was the Secret Keeper for your parents instead of Sirius Black. I was not the one to have cast the spell on your parents' home in Godric's Hollow, nor did I look too closely at Percy Weasley's or Ron Weasley's pet rat whenever they brought him to school. At the time during which arrests were being made and Sirius Black was sent to Azkaban, I was not the Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot until after the departure of Bartemus Crouch Senior from that very position, and even then there was one other after him that held the position before I did. Therefore it would have been quite difficult for me to ensure a trial for Sirius, at the time. And, to be absolutely honest about it, I was not inclined to at the time, as I too believed that he had betrayed them. It was only after years of healing from the hurt and seeing new evidence present itself in Sirius's behavior during your Third Year that I began to see the truth."

Harry took a deep breath and let out a trembling sigh.

"One last thing, and then I'll tell you the answer to your question earlier," Harry told him. "What does the prophecy mean by; neither can live while the other survives?"

Dumbledore frowned and sat back in his chair, his hands folded in his lap, but he said nothing.

"You think," Harry answered for him instead, "that it means both of us have to die in order for him to finally be taken out. That I have to die in order for him to die."

Dumbledore remained silent, but the look in his eyes said it all.

Harry pursed his lips and let out a low whistle. "Well, good thing I'm stuck in a time loop then. Gives me plenty of time to truly become his equal, seeing as I've already been marked and all. I think I'll try it out again tonight, see how well I do against him alone this time. It'll be a good test of my skills, see how much further I have to go."

"What? Harry? What do you mean time loop?" Dumbledore was on his feet and he probably hadn't even noticed that he'd grabbed his wand and was pointing it, trembling, at Harry.

"Are you going to Obliviate me again Professor?" Harry asked 'innocently'. The ex-Headmaster looked down at his wand in his hand, almost stunned to see it there and pointing at Harry. Slowly, he lowered it. "Didn't think so. I'll say this for you, Albus. You're a manipulative bastard, no doubt about that. But you're not evil. Not the kind of evil Voldemort is anyway. No, you're a worse kind, the kind that makes good people turn a blind eye to suffering, and the kind that makes you believe that you're always right and that your Greater Good is better than everyone else's Greater Good."

Harry stood up and walked out the back door, pausing only to glance back and say, "I'm going to walk straight into Voldemort's trap tonight at the Ministry of Magic. And I'm probably going to die to. But then I'm going to wake up in my bed at Hogwarts and it's going to be this morning all over again. If you want to send people to help, you're more than welcome to. Just... this time make sure that no one among the Aurors kill Sirius, Remus or Hagrid again. They get confused real easy, I've seen it." Then he walked out the door.

Dumbledore was on his feet and behind Harry faster than he'd ever seen the old man move before.

"I'm sorry, Harry," he said with a great deal of regret, "but I cannot allow that."

"What—?" Harry started to turn around, but it was already too late. The spell was already cast.

"Obliviate."

DOM_
_ _DOM

Harry woke up with a start, sitting up straight in his bed as his bedside clock chimed the hour. Seven o'clock in the morning.

He remembered everything.

"Bastard!" Harry screamed, jumping out of bed.

He didn't question why he could remember events and memories that should have been erased from his mind, despite the potential conflict with the Prime Rule it carried. He was too worked up and way too angry to think about that right now.

Harry almost went flying off to London again, only this time to make good on all his threats and even declare a blood feud or whatever it took to keep Dumbledore from obliterating him anymore. The only thing that stopped him was the realization that without the Major Spirit of Air on his side, he really had no chance against the Leader of the Light. And the consequences for summoning the Elemental Spirits, even during the time loops, were too severe to consider so casually. Although his elemental powers had certainly surprised the old man, he really didn't like risking his friends lives like that. He wasn't so cold hearted that he could watch them be hurt or killed, despite knowing that they'd be fine the next day.

Then Neville's idea about what he'd do with a time loop echoed back through his mind.

"No consequences, huh?" he thought out loud.

He quickly raced to the Room of Requirement, ignoring anyone that might have seen him running around in his pajamas, and once he was inside he quickly set up for the element selection ritual. Today he matched with Earth. It was easier to get Dumbledore and Fudge to Hogwarts as well, since he'd puzzled out what had grabbed their attentions in the first place.

Dumbledore and Fudge's behavior was easily predictable, and almost identical to the other days. Only instead, Harry had outright killed Snape and spent the day torturing Umbridge with the help of the rest of the students of the entire school. Hermione even tried to beat his record on using the torture-glamour on the toad-like witch. He held back considerably so she could have a chance at it. Thankfully she prescribed to her own warnings about using the modified spell.

At lunch, however, he made sure he kept Neville, Ginny and Luna close by during the confrontation with Phoenix-Dumbledore, along with Hermione and Ron of course.

"Well, well, well, this is something I never expected to see," said Harry as the Headmaster and the Minister walked straight up to him. He had been playing a round of Five Card Stud with his friends, when the expected visitors came in. He folded and signaled the others to clean up the game.

"Harry, my boy, what have you done?" asked Dumbledore condescendingly, and a bit disappointed too.

"I'm stuck in a time loop. My friends were generous enough to point out that means there are no consequences beyond today's. Time magic thing," he shrugged, getting his wand out and struggling to hear something, anything that would help him out.

"Harry . . . such things are—impossible," the old wizard assured him.

Harry pointed his wand casually over his shoulder. A jet of blue light shot out faster than anyone could blink or even turn their heads. The rubble that had been covering Snape's decaying corpse lifted and even repaired the hole in the ceiling and reconstituted into the Head Table, which had been destroyed in Snape's death. Harry had gotten a bit carried away.

Dumbledore stared. The spell had been cast at a speed and with sufficient power that spoke of superb control over his magic. Dumbledore knew that Harry should not be that capable... at all.

"However, I'll not be the first to admit that even I do not know everything," said Dumbledore.

"Albus, we, uh, we really have some—some matters to attend to," Fudge interrupted and pointed not to subtly as the decaying corpse at the front of the Great Hall.

"Ah, yes Cornelius, I was just getting to that. For the time being why don't you just stand back and await my signal while I speak with Harry and attempt to resolve this peaceably. Thank you Cornelius," Dumbledore waved the Minister back into the crowd of Auror's like he was just another of the man's students.

All the children, especially those that knew what animosity lay between Dumbledore and the Minister, witnessed this with shocked, almost betrayed eyes. Harry's friends felt this betrayal the most deeply, some more than others. Harry, on the other hand had seen it before, and he was too distracted, trying to listen, to pay any attention this time around.

"Professor? WHAT is the MEANING of THIS?" Hermione screeched, pointing at the Headmaster and Fudge.

"Miss Granger, a great deal has occurred today, and I assure you, I mean to rectify that here and now," Dumbledore assured her.

"Harry just told you something is happening to him, which defies all logic, and you treat him like he's as crazy as the Daily Prophet was making him out to be?" Hermione accused. "And then, on top of that, you show up with the Minister of Magic answering to you directly? When just the other day he had his toad in here hunting down the last of your supporters, attacking Hagrid, who is standing right there, and Professor McGonagall, who is in Saint Mungo's now! What is the meaning of this, Professor?"

The whole room winced as the bushy-haired witch reached an octave that humans weren't meant to reach by natural means, one that grated heavily on the nerves.

Ron, Ginny, Neville, and Luna stepped up beside her, however, and held their wands at their sides, tips aglow. At the center, and just behind them, Harry stood silent and still. He'd finally caught on to what he'd been hearing all along...

"Harry, please, tell me what it is that you have done," Dumbledore stepped forward, ignoring the other children for the moment, "Perhaps it's not too late. We can still—"

"Still what, Professor?" Hermione interrupted once more. Twice in one day, everyone was impressed. "Still in time to repair the damage to your plan?"

Everybody stopped and frowned. Plan? What... plan! They all thought.

"Plan?" Ron repeated. The whole room frowned and glared at the authority figures.

"I didn't think anything of it until today," Hermione told them all, but keeping her eyes on Dumbledore, "But I've noticed a lot of inconsistencies over the years. I've taken note of everything, and a lot of it never made any sense to me. Professor Dumbledore just kept explaining it all away, and I believed him! And then he shows up with the Minister, the Minister who was feuding with and trying to undermine everything about Dumbledore, and yet here they are together. With the Minister at the Professor's beck and call."

The whole room was glancing back and forth between Dumbledore and Fudge, noticing how Fudge skirted around the back side of Dumbledore, a great deal like one other rat and his master.

"Miss Granger, I'm not sure what you're talking about, the Minister contacted me, to inform me of what it is Harry had done. Releasing dangerous dark creatures into the heart of the Ministry of Magic?" the Professor made his case. "And the rumors about Madam Umbridge and Professor Snape seem to have been true. How regrettable."

"Auror's, ARREST POTTER!" Fudge hysterically screamed, pointing with his wand.

Dumbledore shook his head, but did not seem surprised in the least. "Cornelius, that was not the signal, but the damage has been done, it is time to repair what can be repaired. Perhaps I can discover what it is that has happened to Mister Potter to grant him such dark and unnatural powers..."

"NO!" Hermione screamed and placed herself between the Aurors and Harry. She wasn't the only one as three quarters of the school... no, make that the whole school rallied around him, wands out and pointing at the adults. Harry would have reached up to take Hermione by the shoulder, but something caught his ear. He tilted his head and listened more carefully.

"I'm sorry Professor, but we can't let you do that to Harry!" Ron defended his friend.

"And none of us are going to let you take him!" Ernie Macmillan warned, the entire House of Hufflepuff behind him, and between Harry Potter and those that wanted to take him.

Albus sighed and shook his head. "I do apologize children, but I believe you all have been greatly deceived. Sadly, I do not see us resolving this solely with our words, as there are many things afoot that children simply cannot understand. Therefore, I'm afraid I must insist you all allow us to pass and return to your seats. Now."

The Suits of Armor came around as quick and loud as ever. For a time, Harry thought the noise might interfere with what he was listening to, but instead it actually made it easier for him to hear and understand it!

He had actually been worried for a brief time there, as he couldn't hear the earth as well as he could the wind, but then he realized it was just different. Where the wind was always moving and the air always changing, the earth was much slower than that. While it did change and it did move and it did speak, it just did so very slowly, compared to the other elements. Harry had actually been hearing the Minor spirit's name all morning, repeated one syllable at a time with each footfall against the ground. It wasn't until Dumbledore had summoned Fawkes and frozen the entire hall that he managed to put all of the syllables together.

Harry spoke a name.

The earth shook, the ground leaped, and yet everyone remained stuck to the surface they were stuck to, except for the Suits of Armor and all the Aurors and Fudge and Dumbledore. A million eyes blinked out of the earth and every stone that was connected to the earth. The Minor Spirit was actually a massive golem that could do anything through the earth, but would do little to protect His Summoner without first watching for a while. Moments later, Dumbledore simultaneously summoned the Minor and Medium Spirits of Fire and fused with his Familiar into Phoenix-Dumbledore.

Faced with this new threat, Harry listened more carefully when he needed the help of the Medium Spirit, who thankfully spoke with some urgency, taking whole minutes to say its name to him rather than hours. The Major Spirit was suitably impressed when Harry finally said it's child's name so soon after summoning the Minor Spirit.

Earth was actually indifferent to Fire, neither having much affect against the other, and the power of the Medium Spirit and the Minor Spirit together was enough to combat Dumbledore's phoenix form. Harry was even allowed to grant all his friends the same earth-golem-armor the Medium Spirit granted him to protect themselves and to help him fight off Dumbledore and the Suits of Armor. Afterward, Harry erected earthen barriers over every Floo and with the help of the Medium Spirit of Earth, covered the castle with a giant crystal dome to keep anyone else from attacking, from either the Ministry, or elsewhere.

Harry promised that it would be gone by 'tomorrow', either because of the time loop, or because he took it down. After all that, he decided it was time to start listening for the name of the Major Spirit of Earth and have a real conversation with Him. It took Harry the rest of the night, hidden beneath Hogwarts, entombed within the Earth itself listening to the spirits to finally learn the full name of the Major Spirit of Earth.

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The morning after that, Water came up in the rotation. Harry didn't even need the Medium Spirit to beat Dumbledore, but he made the contract anyway, as he was truly, truly angry with Dumbledore and

washed him out to the Black Lake and had the Giant Squid take care of him. He was used as insurance against her boyfriend, as a warning of what he'd have to do the next time he wanted her to take him back. Al almost murdered the ex-Headmaster right then and there so he wouldn't have to face such a punishment in the future.

He also switched things up with the deals he made, this time making a deal with the Merpeople at the bottom of the Lake rather than just the Centaurs or the Acromantulas. They basically kept both (still alive, but missing) Umbridge and Snape in their prison and never let either escape or allow anyone other than Harry himself to know they were there at all, and Harry would do them favors.

Well... him and his translator. Turned out he was right about Hermione and her knack for languages, as he gave her the book on the Mermish language, and a couple of hours, during which he tortured Snape and Umbridge both in new and interesting ways, and she spoke it well enough that the Merpeople got their own translator, who spoke a decent English brogue-dialect, to make the deal with. Harry didn't know where they finally put the two, and he didn't care to know. Because, unfortunately, he knew they'd be back to tormenting him the very next day.

The Major Spirit of Water wasn't quite as impressed with Harry as Her counterparts had been, but then he overpowered a cleaning spell with his remaining magic, post-midnight of course, as well as part of his deal with the Merpeople, and suddenly the Black Lake wasn't looking so black. She thanked Harry for the gift, as temporary as it was, and forged the contract.

A number of other favors he had to do before the end of the reset, unfortunately, also included throwing a massive party in the middle of the Great Hall, and wiping out a number of dark creatures around the castle before dawn. Seeing as he didn't have his magic until after midnight, taking out the dark creatures became more difficult, and flying into London to get money from his vault for the party wasn't an option as he couldn't transform either. So he made due with what he had, which was a whole lot of Auror's who'd just witnessed the Boy Who Lived, aka the One Who Lived, trounce Dumbledore without even trying. As well as feed him, and the Minister, to a Tentacle Demon, just to satisfy the jealousy of the Giant Squid.

So when he told them to hunt down and destroy every dark creature on the list he gave them, which was the same list the MerKing had given him, they eagerly did it, as Auror's were very practical people and they knew as well as anyone that knew Fudge, that the Dark Lord was definitely back and they wanted Harry on their side, so it was a good idea to do him small favors here and there. It also wasn't too difficult to, in speaking to the right people at the right times, which he already knew, to convince all four Houses to have their 'in-House Parties' in the Great Hall instead. The Ravenclaws were in charge of the gaming entertainment, the Gryffindors were in charge of getting food and supplies, and the Slytherins, under the direction of the Sexy, Sexy Witches rather than the Three Morons, put it all together. The Hufflepuffs, however, were in charge of the theme and making sure everyone had a good time.

Harry had so much fun he planned on doing this again some time, but the whole day was really busy and more than a little stressful as he knew he had one more Element to go, and it was the same Element Dumbledore had used against him every day for the past week!

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Harry expected a hard time from the Minor and Medium Spirits of Fire, but actually, right there during the selection ritual the next reset morning, they both forged a contract with him, not based on magical exchange, but the promise that they could all have a turn toasting Dumbledore. Even the Major Spirit of Fire made it a condition, but added in that the phoenix had to be included. It needed to learn its lesson, He had said.

Harry let the Minor Spirit go first, as he had to figure out a pattern that would get Dumbledore to the castle alone, and bring Fawkes along with him. It actually wasn't that hard, he just had to make sure the Order found out what he was doing that day, and had done to Snape and Umbridge, while staying away from the Ministry. He also learned, while doing this, how to get all of the other Professors, and the OWL Proctors, to take the day off, without having to spend the whole day torturing either Snape or Umbridge. He just had to offer similar incentives, as he had to Madam Pince with the Sugar Quills, to each of them, or all of them, and not inform them that their colleagues were also taking the day off, as they would then naturally

assume said colleagues would cover for them, and would understand after they came back.

Harry labeled this pattern "Skip Day" in his head, despite it was the teachers skipping rather than the students.

Harry was particularly proud of how it was he got Dumbledore to come back to the Castle, without Fudge or a lot of Aurors, in the first place. All he did was "let slip" the means to contact the ex-Headmaster to those few on the staff that were still loyal to him. They immediately contacted him, whether via Floo, or OWL, or Adfero, depending on the professor, but all through different means as he gave them different ways of contacting him. Dumbledore, and Harry along with the rest of the students at Hogwarts, were the only ones to realize, by early afternoon, that there were no more teachers at Hogwarts, save for two. And those two were being tortured by their students before being shipped off to either the Acromentula or the Merpeople for safekeeping.

Once Dumbledore was there, Harry met him along with the entire student body in the Great Hall. Seeing as he brought no Aurors with him this time, Dumbledore immediately resorted to using the defenses of the Castle he still held at his command. And then Harry demonstrated a couple of his Elemental Powers, which he still had access to as none of the contracts with the Fire Spirits cost him any of his power. Dumbledore immediately brought out the big guns as it were, minus Fawkes this first time. The Minor Spirit burned the old man from the inside out after he tried summoning it, despite him being 'fire-proof' from numerous magics he had encountered in his long life. The next afternoon, the Medium Spirit ignored Dumbledore's call, but answered Harry's, and was throwing flaming punches right alongside the young wizard.

After all that, Harry confidently knew exactly what buttons to press to bring Dumbledore in alone and with Fawkes the phoenix. He'd just left a note for the man, delivered via flame (thanks to the Minor Spirit) telling him to meet in the middle of the Forbidden Forrest; the middle of the Acromantula den.

Harry had informed Aragog of his intentions and the giant spider, in no uncertain terms, ordered every last one of it's children to flee and never look back. Dumbledore arrived to an empty clearing, thanks to Fawkes teleporting him in. The whole place exploded in fiery flames

the moment Harry summoned the Major Spirit of Fire. Normally he'd have to sacrifice a number of years from his life to do that, instead he'd just had to promise not to spare the phoenix.

Having seen Fawkes join quite easily with Dumbledore against him on more than one occasion, Harry had no problem with it at all, even after seeing what the living embodiment of all fire did to the ancient bird. So while he did nothing to stop the punishment the Major Fire Spirit handed out, he also silently swore to never do it again, as nobody deserved that more than once, especially not Fawkes.

After that, Harry wondered what to do with his days. As... cathartic as it was torturing and killing his enemies, he didn't really enjoy it as much as he had thought he would. So despite still being angry with Dumbledore's manipulations, he started to look for something else to do with his consequence-free existence.

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Harry woke up in a cold sweat and a scream stuck in his throat. He didn't let it out, but it hardly mattered as he went over what he'd done for the past week in his mind, again and again.

You hear about temporary insanity all the time, it's a classic defense for TV Crime Drama murder trials. The catch is, those dramas never really show what it means to go temporarily insane, and while they show some of the consequences, usually the legal ones and such, they do not often display what happens inside the head of the person that went insane.

Harry threw up all over his bed.

He did it twice more, for five minutes each, before he had enough presence of mind to get off the bed.

He'd... killed and... tortured people! Why had he done that? What had made him lose himself like—?

That Morgana-damned Slytherin ritual!

This had all started right after that!

They had told him that it would just make him more him at the time, and apparently they'd been right. His guilt drove him to do what he did best, drive himself to death trying to 'make it right' and then his frustration and anger got to the point he couldn't even see straight anymore and actually tortured and killed those that he was most frustrated and angry with. But what had happened to Fawkes yesterday... the other day, that had broken through the haze of anger and frustration, showing Harry exactly what he had become.

Just another Death Eater thug doing whatever he wanted to do.

Harry went straight to the Hospital Wing after cleaning up in the shower, skipping breakfast entirely.

"Potter! What is the meaning of this?" demanded Madam Pomphrey as he came barging into her office.

In reply, Harry pulled out his wand, pointed it at the side of his head and shouted, "REDUCTO!"

"Potter!" the school nurse jumped to her feet and rushed towards him, only to stop short when she saw that the spell was frozen still an inch away from the tip of his wand, and two and a half inches from striking his skull. Then it, very slowly, circumnavigated around his skull until it was on the other side before suddenly streaking at normal speed against the stone wall of the ward, which did not explode but did punch a hole about the size of a large fist in one section.

"I'm stuck in a time loop Madam Pomphrey, and about five-six... some number of years ago, I unwittingly participated in an apparently common ritual done in Slytherin Common Room during their parties. One time! And since then, whenever I get the slightest bit angry or frustrated... or just plain outright hate someone, I spend the whole day torturing and killing them!"

Harry then sat down with a huff on an empty bed and asked, "Is there anything you can do to help me? Please?"

Not for the first time, Poppy Pomphrey found herself briefly at a loss when it came to the young Mister Potter. With his father, it had often been because his own pranks had backfired in his or his friends'

faces, much as it had been for the Weasley twins. With Harry however...

In his First year, his magical core had been drained of so much magic it would have killed any normal eleven-year-old, and that wasn't even counting how malnourished he'd been on top of everything else! In his Second year... the boy had a bloody Basilisk Fang in his shoulder with only Phoenix tears to stop the poison and heal the wound, and that didn't even count having to regrow the bones in his arms, checking him out for injuries after driving a flying car into the Whomping Willow of all things, and seeing him in here daily for over a month at Miss Granger's side. Not to mention Dementors, serial killers, werewolves, dragons, merfolk, near-drowning, Merlin only knows whatever they had in that maze and the Cruciatus Curse!

After all that, seeing a case of severe depression and what appeared to be Shell Shock (Wizards are behind the times after all), and saying that he was stuck in a time loop was just par for the course as far as Harry Potter went in Pomphrey's opinion.

"Well then, let's see what we can do about all that then," the school nurse then had him lie down and performed her usual standard of magical scans. When they all came up normal or inconclusive, she began pulling out the more and more exotic stuff. With magic, there was no limit to what you could get or have, so when one is a Healer of any caliber, one must be extremely versatile.

What she discovered was curious, but explainable by what Harry had already told her.

"Well then, Mister Potter, it seems you're actually due for another session in the purification ritual room. After that, we can talk about the other problem you seem to be having," she told him.

"Uh," Harry just had a strange thought, "I feel I need to mention that I now have several binding magical contracts with a number of elemental spirits, and I would not like those revoked..."

"Oh, not to worry about that, Mister Potter. The room only does away with unwanted and darkly formed magical links. So long as you truly require them, any connections that your own core deems worthy and or required, they'll merely be purified, but remain intact

nonetheless. Now come along, this way. Unless you already know the way?"

With a shrug, Harry got up and did in fact lead the way to the Ritual Purification Room of the Hospital Wing. He'd been stuck going straight to it for over two weeks, even if it was a number of years in the past for him now, you don't just forget things like that.

Once inside, the nurse stared at him for a few moments before entering herself and going around the room lighting the candles and preparing a very different ritual than the one Harry had had to stand in for half a month or more.

"Madam Pomphrey?" he questioned.

"Not the one you thought I'd be doing, is it Mister Potter?" she asked with a small bit of mischief.

"Not exactly. I'm not... what is it that you are doing?" he finally asked her.

"So, I see you haven't been stuck in time for long enough to become interested in healing," she remarked. "Shame. So few have the aptitude for it these days, despite Healer being a required profession. Just as vital as being an Auror I'd say. Allowing my prejudice to shine a bit, I would say that it's quite a bit more vital."

"Given how many times you've patched me up and helped me out of jams like these, I'm not inclined to argue. But what ritual are you doing? The last one you said was to break unwanted magical bonds... why are their two pentagrams on the floor?"

"It's called a decagram, Mister Potter. Honestly, you should have followed in Miss Granger's footsteps than young Mister Weasley's. Ancient Runes or Arithmancy would do better to serve you than Divination."

"I've been known to have a vision or two," Harry joked.

"Yes, of that I have no doubt. But were they ever of the future?" she invited him to continue.

Harry grimaced and just shrugged it off, suddenly feeling a bit uncomfortable, but not from the ritual she was still preparing.

"Now then," she stood before him and directed him to the center of the floor and took out an incense bowl, "just a little sage and we're ready. Are you ready, Mister Potter?"

"For what?" he asked, unsure.

She just smiled at him and lit the sage brush in the incense bowl and suddenly the decagram was split in two. A pure white pentagram with the point in front of him, and a pure black one with the bottom two points on either side. Madam Pomphrey began to walk counter-clockwise around the circle, waving the smoking sage up and down, spreading the scent all over the room, muttering some spell that Harry could not understand under her breath.

As she walked, the white pentagram followed her, keeping pace, while the black pentagram went in the opposite direction, going at the same speed. Harry wanted to turn and follow her, but something was stopping him. He couldn't describe what it was, but it was similar to what had happened during the Slytherin Ritual... and what had happened during the elemental selection rituals he had done.

"What...?" he started to ask, but the answer to his unasked question showed itself without prompting.

The pentagrams suddenly sped up and were lifting up off the floor. Where Harry was at the center, a field of pure white sprang up and began lifting through his feet, taking some kind of black essence with it as it passed. By the time it reached his waist, the pure white had turned a mottled gray. By the time it reached his chest, it was a smoky light black. When he looked up and saw the decagram once more, the white and the black had switched places, and Harry felt... clean.

He hadn't even noticed before, but after it was gone it was... amazing the difference.

"What was that?" he asked the matron as she waved her wand and the glowing circle vanished and the candles went out as normal lighting returned.

"A purification ritual. It is taught as a NEWT level theoretical exercise for those pursuing the Healer or Spell Crafter path. Quite frankly, I think it should be taught as an intro to Defense Against the Dark Arts, third or fourth year, given some of what I've seen. Still, too much could go wrong, drawing darkness in rather than away, hence the NEWT level. All it did, Mister Potter, was take away any lingering Dark Magic that may lay dormant in your body or magical core. Feel better?"

"Yeah, loads," he said, sounding as surprised as he felt.

"If I might make a suggestion, Mister Potter... talk to someone. It doesn't matter who, just someone you know you can trust, and confide in them. I'm sure both Mister Weasley and Miss Granger would be glad to listen to you. And we are at a magical school. Time magic, while poorly understood, is acknowledged as being real, and I've seen the three of you figure your ways out of more pickles than this."

"Thanks Madam Pomphrey," said Harry, genuinely meaning it, "I think I'll do that."

He went to breakfast after that and just enjoyed spending time with his friends. By lunch time, he resolved himself to doing nothing but being with his friends for the next little while.

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Harry woke up, went to breakfast, hung out with Ron, studied with Hermione, went to lunch, took his History of Magic OWL, practiced his Occlumency, practiced his magic control, went to dinner, and then went to bed. With the exception of falling for Voldemort's trap, and racing off to the Department of Mysteries, he made sure to perform the same actions he would on any other normal day. He even stopped getting Snape arrested, but instead found other ways to avoid and/or discourage the Potions Professor from taking him away for more 'Remedial Potions' lessons. After going to bed, he went to sleep.

The next morning, Harry woke up, went to breakfast, hung out with Ron, studied with Hermione, went to lunch, took his History of Magic OWL, practiced his Occlumency, practiced his magic control, went

to dinner, and then went to bed. The day after that, Harry woke up, went to breakfast, hung out with Ron, studied with Hermione, went to lunch, took his History of Magic OWL, practiced his Occlumency, practiced his magic control, went to dinner, and then went to bed. And every day afterward, he woke up, went to breakfast, hung out with Ron, studied with Hermione, went to lunch, took his History of Magic OWL, practiced his Occlumency, practiced his magic control, went to dinner, and then went to bed. Every day, he made as much the same as he possibly could, making it so he lived the same day with the same events again, and again, and again, and again, and again.

He lasted six resets before snapping.

It wasn't a big snap. It wasn't even a 'twig-in-a-forest' snap. It was more he corrected Hermione. Twice. In a row. About test questions.

She wouldn't speak to him for the rest of the day, and Ron was on her side for once. It was only in hindsight that he realized he'd also beaten Ron in chess while correcting Hermione, and that was only because truthfully, he'd not been paying attention. In all honesty, he'd been going on auto-pilot and hadn't been as involved with his 'acting' as he should have been. But it was really hard to make the same old conversations, that he repeated on a daily basis, anything but boring. He tried to change things up a bit here and there, asking different questions, hoping to get different responses, giving different answers, hoping to get different reactions. Unfortunately, it never did much good.

By the next reset, he was silently mouthing along with what everyone around him was going to say and do. The reset after that, he tried the silent treatment, and while it got him a few comments of concern or worry, it didn't change as much as he had hoped. He even tried hanging out with other people for a time. Those that didn't know him from the DA, shunned him, those that he didn't have an "in" with, typically were polite but aloof with him, not opening up at all, despite him knowing them better from past resets.

Harry already knew that living like there was no tomorrow, IE consequence free, was a bit of an indulgent nightmare. Although he did still have the elves make him whatever he wanted rather than what he and every other student always had for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. What he really wanted wasn't things or even

consequence free relationships. He wanted a family, true friends, and he wanted his childhood back dammit! But thanks to Dumbledore's so called "Greater Good" that was impossible now, wasn't it?

. . . Wasn't it?

Or was it...?

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"Sirius, tell me about my parents," Harry said into the communication mirror. He was sitting on the roof of the Great Hall, hidden in the shadows of the clock tower so nobody that wasn't airborne would see him.

"What would you like to know, Harry?" Sirius asked in reply, a warm smile on his reflected face.

"Anything really. I just... I want to know more about them. Please?"

"All right, twist my arm why don't you. Now let me think here... Ah, let me tell you about the time James and I first met," Sirius told stories for the rest of that day.

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"Sirius, can you tell me about my parents?"

"What would you like to know, Harry?" Sirius asked in reply as he and his godson walked along the edge of the roof of Grimmauld Place. It had caused a slight commotion when Harry had showed up out of the blue, until he suddenly changed into an eagle and back again and explained with a familiar grin that he'd decided to take the rest of the day off from school. Sirius couldn't help saying that when Harry grinned like that, he looked a lot more like his father than normally.

"How did my parents meet? What were they like with each other?"

"Er..." Sirius suddenly looked a great deal less eager to speak with his godson.

"Please Sirius?" This time, the way Harry looked at him made the boy look a great deal more like his mother than Sirius felt comfortable with.

"Well, it's... it's important to remember how they were at the end, isn't it Harry?" Sirius tried to diffuse what was to come.

"They were friends, weren't they?" Harry asked 'innocently'.

"Er... not really. Not until Sixth Year that is. And even then, they weren't like you and Hermione. Uh, er, and-and Ron of course," Sirius stammered, tripping over his own words worse than Tonks with her own feet. "They weren't even really friendly towards each other until Seventh Year, and they were dating before Christmas of course. They were really in love and everyone could see that they would end up together after that. They married less than a year after graduating, you see. Let me tell you about the time..."

"They didn't get along? Why not?" the boy asked with a touch of concern.

Sirius winced and wouldn't meet Harry's gaze. "Well, you see, James was kind of... and Lily, well, she, uh, er..."

"Like Ron and Hermione then?" Harry threw his dog-father a bone.

"YES! Exactly! Wait, what?"

"They're always fighting and bickering," said Harry with a shrug. "If it weren't for me, I'm pretty sure they wouldn't even like each other most of the time. But ever since the Yule Ball last year... I don't know, I think there's something there, but they both deny it every time I try and bring it up."

"What happened at the Yule Ball?" asked Sirius.

"Hermione wore a dress for the first time that Ron had ever seen her in one. That reminds me, I need to make up for that night with Parvati and Padma... again," he vaguely recalled being 'forgiven' for

that night by both the twins during one of his almost-forgotten card games at the Ravenclaw Party. Multiple times.

"Oh, well, yeah that would probably do it," Sirius reluctantly admitted.

"So, can you tell me what my parents were really like, Sirius? Please? The truth, the real truth?" begged Harry

The last Black heaved a heavy sigh and began to speak, with much embarrassment, regret, and more than a little nostalgia, about the times the Marauder's faced off against the terror that was the redheaded Gryffindor known as "Evans", along with her numerous friends throughout all the houses, who she often called upon to help in combating the Marauder's pranks. It had taken the longest time to get Sirius to open up like this, and it wasn't until Harry lost patience and showed up at Headquarters that the man stopped avoiding him whenever he brought up his parents relationship before they were dating. It was an enlightening conversation, one that he repeated quite often in the resets to come.

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"Professor Lupin," Harry started to speak, but was interrupted by the werewolf before he could finish.

"Harry, please," Remus interrupted with a wane smile. "I'm no longer your teacher. Call me Remus, please."

"All right then, Remus," acknowledged the time-stuck boy, before finishing his earlier question. "Would you mind telling me about my parents?"

Remus smiled, more than a bit sadly, "Of-of course I wouldn't mind, Harry. What... er, what would you like to know?"

It was like pulling teeth out of a... heh, out of a werewolf, getting information from Remus. And he'd always take the slightest excuse to leave whenever Harry had actually managed to corner him into telling him anything about his parents. He wasn't like this during Third Year, Harry remembered. But at the same time... he couldn't recall Remus actually telling him many stories, or anything other than facts he already knew from other people about his parents. He

didn't even learn his father was an Animagus or was part of the Marauders until Sirius finally revealed himself, and in fact he remembered it as Sirius was the one to tell him all of that in the first place!

Why was Remus so scared to talk to him about his parents?

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Remus wasn't the only one either. Hagrid would only talk about his parents as individuals. James did this, or Lily helped with that. Never James and Lily were... until they were married after Hogwarts and had him. The Professors were the same way, either talking about them individually in their own classes, or referring him to speak with Professor McGonagall as she had been their Head of House, until they remembered what had happened to her the night before, and that's usually when the conversation would end with his other teachers.

Harry was half tempted to go after Pettigrew, just to get a few more stories, but he wasn't that desperate quite yet.

In hindsight, Harry wondered why it was he had never done this before now. He'd wanted to know more about his parents since as long as he could remember, but he'd only been handed out little tidbits here and there, usually at very specific points in his life. Like... like rewards or treats for doing the "right thing" at the "right time". And everyone but Sirius wouldn't talk to him about anything but bare bones facts. This stank of Dumbledore.

Still, he was doing it now, so he wouldn't blame himself. After all, there's a reason they always say that hindsight is perfect and foresight is blind.

Harry really wished he could go insane again and go back to fighting and near-killing Dumbledore, but to be perfectly honest with himself, he just didn't care anymore. And while he deeply regretted his actions and would never, ever intentionally repeat them, even once, the fact of the matter was that he wouldn't change what he had done either. At least as far as fighting Dumbledore... and maybe tormenting Snape and Umbridge. Come to think of it, he didn't regret

fighting Dumbledore as much as he actually regretted what he did to the greasy bat and the toad witch, and that's saying something.

The man had lost his trust when he'd Obliviated him in the back and then 'fought' him on subsequent days, and with each betrayal, no matter how out of or in context it was when he discovered it, it no longer surprised him and it didn't even frustrate him as much as it used to. Every morning, everyone in the Order believed he was on Dumbledore's side, even Dumbledore himself. So no matter what happened during the day, good or bad, he was always seen as others as being a naive little boy who trusted in a great wizard. Instead of the somewhat cynical man with broken-trust issues that he was becoming.

Harry wouldn't deny that Dumbledore was a great wizard, and in many ways a great man. But he was just that, a man. As fallible as the rest of them, perhaps even more so as too many others put their faith in him, even when he was dead wrong. He also saw only one, single solution to the 'problem' that was Tom Riddle, aka Voldemort. Harry had only to hear the complete prophecy to piece the rest of it together. He didn't know many of the details, but the endgame was more than obvious. Dumbledore believed that only Harry could stop Voldemort for good. That he was destined to, or something like that. Which meant that Dumbledore fully expected Harry to die fighting him. And that Voldemort had to be killed, rather than "imprisoned" or "stopped" said even more about the man's state of mind when it came to the current Dark Lord. The last Dark Lord, before Voldemort, was still alive and imprisoned somewhere on the Continent, the one that Dumbledore "defeated" so many years ago.

The mind wiping was possibly the worst of it, of what Harry had discovered so far at any rate, but there were also a number of things that he was allowed to remember that made him ask how any decent human being could ever be a part of such actions. And then there was the fact that Harry wasn't the only victim of old men's crimes, where Voldemort and Dumbledore were equally at fault in a multitude of sins. All together, it made Harry more tired and exhausted than angry and frustrated.

Therefore, he decided to ignore it, at least for a little while. Not like it changed anything in the present, and the present was all Harry had to deal with.

It certainly didn't change the fact that Harry was bored out of his sanity most days.

Harry was sitting in the Great Hall at breakfast time, listening to Hermione and Ron have the same bickering argument they always had. He looked around, bored, trying to see something he hadn't seen before, or had just overlooked, maybe hoping to catch sight of something that would briefly spark his interest for a little while. Eventually, his eyes drifted over to Snape's empty chair at the Head Table. Idly, he wondered what it was the man did during these morning hours when Harry wasn't tormenting him with either imprisonment or... other regrettable actions. Going with the impulse, Harry stood up and walked towards the dungeons. Hermione and Ron didn't even notice he'd left until several minutes later when Hermione asked 'Harry' a question and there was no response.

As it turns out, Snape was actually reporting in to his respective 'masters' during breakfast hours, one of the few times he could count on privacy from student and professor alike. Harry knocked on the door and saw the mirror out and Snape's sleeve, the one hiding the Dark Mark, looking hastily pulled down, and could figure out the rest. On subsequent resets, he even snuck in under his Invisibility cloak and listened to both reports. The one to Dumbledore was actually the more interesting one, as he always made that one after contacting Voldemort via the Dark Mark, apparently coordinating the Dark Lord's attack on Harry.

It also explained why there was no vision on the days Harry got Snape 'taken care of' early enough, as it had been before he'd contacted Voldemort to organize said mental attack.

To Dumbledore however, besides an update on Professor McGonagall and Hagrid, Snape also told him of the plans to bombard Harry with a vision of Sirius being in jeopardy, and Harry's movements for the last two weeks during OWLs and seeing how he seemed to be holding up under the added stress. How nice of him to wait to mentally attack him on the day of his last and least interesting OWL. Honestly, Harry hadn't given it any thought, until now.

That night, and every night after he listened in on Snape's reports to his two masters, Harry went alone to the Department of Mysteries and retrieved the Prophecy. Malfoy and his posse of Death Eaters

showed up right on schedule. Harry managed to take down three of them by himself, usually, and draw the rest through hazardous areas that managed to get them, usually, until he'd been in every room save for one in the Department of Mysteries. Until Voldemort finally showed up, having grown impatient after any length of time more than a single hour. He and Harry even dueled some times.

Harry did much better than the last time, except that Harry could never catch the Dark Lord in the Priori Incantatem effect again, and soon it became a battle of wills and attrition. Dumbledore showed up, and Voldemort tried to possess him again, but came out worse than going in as he had to share Harry's head with the Smurfs, Teletubbies and every annoying children's song he could memorize, which was a lot.

People still got hurt, but Sirius didn't die every time. Instead he'd just get stunned by Bellatrix, which Harry realized afterward was what she shot at him every time. He made a note to shove Sirius off the platform every time they were even in the Death Room, as the man's overconfidence and klutz luck would kill him every single time otherwise.

He still couldn't beat Voldemort, nor any significant number of his Death Eaters. But the Elemental Magic really helped. His Animagus abilities helped as well, when he needed to hide or overpower someone or something unexpected. Unfortunately he still wasn't experienced enough with any of it to use it in a fight without calling on the Elemental Spirits to do his fighting for him, and he didn't dare risk that on so casual a battle.

In the end, Harry decided he needed a vacation before doing any more training.

AN: Special Thanks to my editors and beta-readers; stormdragon and Miss Margie. Thanks to both of them, this chapter is in a lot better shape than it first was. Also, the next chapter is in the outline stages and should have something more for them to take a look at before the end of the week. Thanks, everyone for all your helpful suggestions on what Harry can learn from the Weasley Twins when it comes to Pranking. The majority seemed to be either "look at what others have done and come up with your own version" or "torture Snape, Umbridge, Dumbledore and Voldemort some more in new

and interesting ways". Not in so many words, but to the same effect. :)

Still, it would be... helpful, and extremely beneficial if I had more to go on than aborted "Food Fights" and having Harry act like Happosai from Ranma One Half for half the chapter, which is unfortunately all I've got so far. Again, thank you for any and all suggestions and/or corrections that you happen to notice and submit via Review and PM. Also, if you care to contribute ideas on what Harry might start doing with all his free time, I promise to accept all suggestions as constructive and may employ them as various points in the story, and apologize if you don't see it sooner rather than later. Thanks again, and please Read & Review!

Disclaimer: Well, more like a warning or Parental Advisory. This chapter is deserving of the M Rating, in fact if the NC-17 rating were still available, this chapter would push it over the edge. Contains descriptions of graphic sex and questionable concepts such as underage sex and BDSM. You have been warned.

Chapter 9: Vacation

Harry woke up, the clock chiming the hour and the sunlight streaming in through the window. He reached over for his wand and silently blasted the clock. A moment later, he heard a too-familiar noise and re-aimed his wand to cast a reinforced air-freshening charm at Ron's bed before the smell could hit him. And then he cast a full strength Protego and Silencio combination spell at the canopy of his bed, and turned over to go back to sleep. Less than an hour later, Ron and the guys were pounding on his protected canopy, but Harry could not hear them, and in fact he was deep asleep.

A few hours later, he opened his eyes, briefly, and could see Hermione and Ron both beside his bed, but he could not hear them, so he went back to sleep again. The next time he woke up, he'd just experienced the vision Voldemort sent him every day at three on the dot, so at least he knew what time it was. Canceling the silencing spell and shielding spell, he finally got up out of bed and went to the bathroom to take a shower.

He'd missed breakfast and lunch, and it was still a few hours till dinner, so Harry planned on visiting the kitchens to get a bite to eat. He was feeling a bit peckish.

Oddly, the Common Room was practically empty, and the people that had been there left just as or just before Harry came down and exited through the portrait hole. He didn't bother with the Invisibility cloak this time, and he hadn't disappeared or anything, but he at least knew that Ron and Hermione knew where he was, and so what if he missed out on the History OWL, he'd make up for it if he ever got out of this time loop anyway.

Harry took one of the secret passages known only on the Marauder's Map that took him straight from the seventh floor to the same corridor the entrance to the kitchens was on. Once in the kitchens, Dobby and all the other elves were more than happy to give him as much food as he could stand and more. He then just

hung around for a little while, chatting up the little guys, even trying to learn the names of a few here and there.

After that, he didn't really know what to do with himself, so he decided to go for a walk around the lake.

Only... about a tenth of the way around, he picked up a leaf and found himself practicing his elemental magic exercises. He forced himself to stop, only to find himself levitating rocks in various patterns and doing all kinds of tricks with everything around him. He was practicing his magic control, he realized when he was about a quarter of the way around the lake. He dropped everything and put his wand in his pocket and resolved not to touch it for the rest of his walk.

About halfway around the lake, on the side closest to Hogsmeade actually, he picked up a small, smooth stone and started rubbing it, using it as a worry-stone. It took him about ten paces to realize that he'd changed the stone into wood, and then iron, and then steel, aluminum, brass, tin, nickel, copper, titanium and even silver with each step he took. It wasn't even a conscious thing, and here he was practicing his wandless transfiguration skills!

Idly, he noted that he had only been able to get up to Cesium, and still wasn't quite able to make Barium. Yet.

He stopped at the halfway point, with the castle on the other side across from him. How does one even go on vacation, when stuck in a time loop?

He spent the rest of his walk wondering just that, randomly changing the stone in his hand into different materials of all kinds. He wasn't quite good enough yet that he could change things, or affect anything at all really with his magic without either his wand, or being in direct contact with it. He could cast a featherweight charm, as well as any kind of Leviosa, or any spell for that matter, so long as he was touching it when he did. It wasn't quite wandless, like told in stories of ancient gods and titans, but one had to learn how to get on their knees before they could crawl after all.

Harry shook his head to clear his thoughts of his training. It was harder to do than he expected it to be.

Although it was pretty cool that he could, effectively, give himself super strength whenever he wanted to these days. Heck, cast a Depulso banishing charm from his fist right as he punched somebody? He kind of wished, sometimes, that he could do that to...

"Potter!"

Ah, speak of the devil.

"What do you think you're doing out of bounds like this? Ten points from Gryffindor!" Draco pranced and strutted while holding out his Inquisitorial Squad badge.

Harry considered, but no, it wasn't worth it. So, he kept on walking, intending on continuing his stroll around the lake, maybe even visit the centaurs in the forest for a bit.

"Don't ignore me Potter!" Malfoy screamed, brandishing his wand.

Harry ignored him and kept walking.

He also ignored the three curses fired at his back from Malfoy, Crabbe and Goyle's wands.

He shifted into his dragon form and crouched low, the curses shooting over his body and splashing against the distance Whomping Willow, which was sadly out of range to reach the three that had cursed it. Harry decided to correct that problem.

Moving with surprising speed and grace, Harry moved behind the three bullies and opened his eyes right behind Malfoy's head, breathing very shallowly. The three turned around very slowly, and Malfoy screamed like a two-year-old girl. Harry flicked his tail and sent the three flying towards the Whomping Willow, which gleefully enacted it's revenge for being cursed on them.

Shifting to his raven form, Harry took flight and in the setting sun changed to a Great Horned Owl, and suddenly it wasn't so dark anymore. He drifted in a lazy circle around the castle, enjoying the freedom of flight and thanks to this particular form's natural aspects, he made no sound as he flew and wasn't bothered by anything. That was until Hedwig suddenly appeared in his flight path.

His green eyes shone his happiness at seeing her and he wobbled his wings a bit to say 'hello' though he was curious about what would bring her out at this time of day. Looking around, however, he saw practically every owl from the owlery taking flight to go hunting for food.

Hedwig was not impressed with his flying skills it seemed, as she clacked her beak once at him and then ignored him in favor of getting a few mice and other rodents. Curious at this behavior from his friend, Harry wondered if it was something he had done, and then the obvious sort of hit him right between the eyes. He was an owl at the moment. And he hadn't changed in front of Hedwig, so she had no way of knowing it was him. Well, easy enough to fix.

He gained a bit of altitude and made sure he was right in front of her before shifting back to his natural form. He began falling immediately, but once he saw the look of recognition in her eyes, he smiled and shifted back into an owl. He easily regained the lost altitude and was once again flying next to his familiar.

She kept her eye on him the whole time, and if he didn't know any better, he'd swear that she was giving him the evil eye and was just waiting for the both of them to be on the ground to lecture him worse than Hermione ever could. But she was an owl and...

Harry stopped that line of thought right then and there, because at that moment, he was an owl too.

Once they were on the ground, Harry landed on the dirt, but Hedwig perched herself on a nearby tree limb. He changed back and then shrugged and apologized, "Heh, sorry for startling you there Hedwig. Won't happen again." Although, he privately admitted that it probably would if he ever felt up to a late night flight and didn't bother revealing to his owl that he's now an Animagus beforehand.

She glided to his arm, which he held out for her, and then proceeded to peck the ever-living daylights out of him. "Ow! Ow ow ow ow owowowowowowow! OK! OK, I'm sorry! It definitely won't happen again!"

She finally forgave him and then they spent the rest of the night with her showing him how to really fly. Harry resolved to make sure to reveal to Hedwig he was an Animagus every morning. If only to

avoid the punishment, but in the end he learned some very valuable skills from his friend, and resolved to learn all he could from her.

For the next few resets, rather than sleep in, Harry went down to the Owlery, showed Hedwig what he could do, but only with all his many bird forms, and she in turn showed him how best to fly in them. In anything other than an owl or hawk, which the wing span and style was similar in length and shape, though not identical, she would take him around to various flocks of other birds and have him learn from them for a while.

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Harry rather liked the idea that he could now use his wandless magic well enough to give himself the appearance of super powers like in comic books and cartoons.

So, one reset, where he didn't sleep in or alienate everybody, except for Snape, he considered it part of his routine to get Snape taken away and thrown out of the Order as early in the day as possible, EVERY day! Anyway, one reset right before lunch time, he found himself standing across from the Inquisitorial Squad with his friends just behind him.

"Have you lost your mind Potter?" Malfoy screeched, brandishing his wand.

Harry just shrugged, not saying one word.

"I think he's acting pretty smart, Malfoy," Ron shouted over the noise from the rest of the Great Hall. "Taking you down a few pegs! What are you going to do about it?"

Malfoy fumed, and everyone around him tensed, drawing their own wands.

Before any of his friends could do the same, Harry held up his hand and glanced over his shoulder before subtly shaking his head. Hermione and Ginny both nodded, Ron fumed, and Neville just kept trying to remember to breathe. Luna was closely inspecting the

Nargles that had somehow gotten entangled around Ginny and Hermione's heads.

Harry grinned at Malfoy and channeled his magic throughout his entire body, filling himself to the brim with magical power. Something he had only just realized in one of those eureka moments just now, was that the last few times he went on a training kick and faced the rolling death, he had actually been able to dodge thing when he decided to let it go. When he first started training with it, he barely even had a chance before he was smashed flat. It wasn't until after he was even able to stop it, for even just a second that he got fast enough to dodge it.

The eureka moment was that he now realized he hadn't just dodged it because he'd slowed it down for a second, he'd dodged it because while dodging, his magic boosted his speed to superhuman for that instant. Subsequent training had shown him how it was done and made sure he could last longer, but he honestly never noticed because there was no one there to monitor his progress. But right then, seeing that he may have to dodge multiple incoming spells instead of just whatever Malfoy shot at him, he knew he wouldn't normally be able to stop all of them. Hence why the eureka moment only happened just now instead of a day ago.

Harry clenched his fists and regulated his breathing.

"WHAT IS THE MEANING OF ALL THIS?" Umbridge screamed, having just returned from arresting Snape with the Minister and Aurors. She never stayed out of the castle for long, even on days she took Harry to the Ministry for interrogation, she was always back before an hour was up.

"Voldemort is alive and a complete and total idiot," Harry said into the sudden quiet of Umbridge's arrival. "And the Minister is incompetent, as proven with his very cheap methods of staying in power by bullying school children rather than get on with business as normal, like most sensible politicians would've done. Down with the bitchy toad witch!" He pumped his arm into the air like he was saluting or something.

"DOWN WITH THE BITCHY TOAD WITCH!" the whole school chanted, pumping their own arms up and down. "DOWN WITH THE BITCHY TOAD WITCH!"

"ENOUGH!" Umbridge screamed, stepping in front of Malfoy and with no hesitation, cast a stunner at Harry, intending on knocking the boy out and then having him expelled before the hour was through.

Harry blurred to the left slightly, as Umbridge couldn't aim worth shit and would've hit Ron, and putting a Protego shield around his left hand, grabbed the spell bolt mid-flight and then dispelled it just as quickly.

The Great Hall got really, really quiet all of a sudden.

Umbridge fumed, her head turning red and mottled purple, and then she screamed to her Inquisitorial Squad, "ATTACK!" Immediately they all started shooting all kinds of spells.

Harry took a deep breath and magically boosted his reaction time and the processing power of his sight and hand-eye coordination. They weren't all shooting at him, and those that he could see were being targeted, they weren't expecting it and were left completely open. Taking another deep breath, less than a full second after taking the first one, Harry blurred.

He didn't really have another name for it. But then again, his magical training so far had been entirely self-taught and largely unorthodox. Perhaps he should start getting help from the Professors? Well, when he started caring about training again that was. For right now, he was enjoying his vacation. And there was nothing quite like beating Malfoy and Umbridge in a total humiliation duel.

He blocked or canceled or deflected spells away from innocent bystanders in the time it took to blink, and was back where he originally stood and did the same to all the spells that had actually been cast at him. And he did it all without a wand in his hand.

"Harry?" Hermione questioned, a tremble in her voice.

"I'm stuck in a time loop, Hermione. I got bored," was his answer, channeling more magic to his fists, as he manifested a couple stunning and banishing spells around them. He still could not actually cast wandless magic, but he could quite easily now manifest the spells around his fists, and then throw his fists wherever he wanted to.

Harry dashed forward and started with Umbridge, punching her across the face. The stunning spell knocked her out immediately, the banishing spell made her head go flying in the direction his punch sent her, with the rest of her body still attached of course. Not quite fast enough, for Harry's taste however.

He blurred around to her flight path, and then punched her with his other fist straight into her abdomen. He used a slightly different spell combination this time though. He still used a banishing charm, but he overpowered it by a factor of three, which by the way would have sent her all the way across the lake, walls be damned, if not for the other spells. They were a cushioning charm, not overpowered at all, and a Reducto curse, as well as an extra stunner, just to be sure.

The end result, that everyone else saw was when Umbridge screamed "Attack!", Harry blurred in place and all of the spells being cast suddenly disappeared, and then Harry was still for exactly one heartbeat before he blurred again, punching Umbridge across the face, and would have sent her flying into the crowd, if not for Harry blurring again to right in front of her and slamming her with another punch that sent her shooting into the wall behind the Head Table. When the dust settled, they saw her literally embedded in the wall, TKO.

Harry still stood where he last blurred to, his fist still extended, and to every last person in the room, he wasn't even breathing hard or sweating at all. He was actually still holding his breath.

Slowly, he stood straight and glared at the Inquisitorial Squad, letting out his held breath in one long, slow exhalation. They all gulped, and the rest of the room held its breath. Harry blurred again, and the members of the Inquisitorial Squad went flying, literally, all over the room, most just being knocked unconscious, but a few unlucky ones ended up embedded into the wall or ceiling as Umbridge had been. He kept it up, constantly moving and never stopping, until it was just Harry and Malfoy.

"P-p-p-p-Pot-Pot-Pot-ter...!" Malfoy stuttered, his wand, his whole body shaking in fear.

Harry blurred right in front of Malfoy so close their noses were nearly touching.

"What, Malfoy?" Harry whispered.

"Yo-yoo-y-y-yoouu-you w-w-w-won't g-get aw-w-w-way w-w-with this!" he stuttered/screamed.

Harry really, really wanted to kill him. He really, really did. He restrained that impulse.

Instead he overpowered another banishing charm and attached the same cushioning charm so he wouldn't accidentally kill him, and then gave the blonde Slytherin an uppercut that literally sent him through the roof. And then another two hundred and fifty nine feet into the atmosphere when that did not seem to be enough to halt his rapid ascension, and before gravity started working on the falling body once more.

He had really overpowered that last banishing spell.

"Harry? How-HOW DID YOU DO THAT?" Hermione screamed at her friend the moment it was clear the fighting was over with.

Harry shrugged and replied, "Wandless magic. Haven't quite gotten to where I can actually cast it, but it's not too hard, for me now, to manifest the spells around my hands or whatnot."

"Oh..." said Hermione, and then she fainted.

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Harry came to the realization, albeit slowly and over considerable perspective time, that he had screwed up. And way more than his immediate guilt over killing and torturing Snape and Umbridge suggested at.

One afternoon, he was re-reading that novel about the weatherman stuck in a time loop of his very own, and in the reading he recognized that while he'd tried getting back together with Cho, he had only gotten as far as the manipulating events towards his advantage, like where the weatherman was either tricking the various women of the town into sleeping with him, or more likely

when he'd gone through countless times of setting up the "Perfect Date" with the woman he was meant to be with, but where it always ended with her slapping him and him feeling more and more miserable before killing himself for a long while.

All Harry had done when he'd fixated on getting back together with Cho in hopes of ending the time loop, was manipulate her or manipulate events to his advantage. He'd tricked her into inviting him to the Ravenclaw party, which wouldn't even happen if he hadn't gotten Snape fired. And the first time through, he'd gotten angry that he was more or less humiliated by the Ravenclaws treating him like a lumbering neanderthal, and so mastered every one of their games through trial, error, and memorization. And then he'd sort of pushed the envelope and started manipulating events more towards his personal gratification rather than developing a true romance with Cho, or any of the girls really.

Therefore, Harry resolved to make it up to her, and all of the girls that he regretfully tricked into being his slaves like he did. Which lead him to his current circumstances.

"Harry..." Cho sobbed, tears falling down her cheeks, "I... I can't! I just can't!" She ran off.

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"Harry, I... I'm sorry, but I can't!" Cho sobbed quietly, and turned and walked sadly off.

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"Harry... I want to, I really want to, but... I can't!" answered Cho, tears running down her cheeks.

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"Harry, we can't. Not anymore," said Cho, tears in her eyes, but as well as fierce determination. She turned and walked away.

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"Oh Harry, I... I... I..." she fainted in his arms.

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"For crying out loud!" Harry screamed, pulling at his hair. He'd been trying to get Cho to go on a date with him for weeks now!

Without tricking her into inviting him to the Ravenclaw party, and even when there wouldn't be a Ravenclaw party, no matter what he did, she always said no. And she usually was crying her eyes out as she said it.

He'd done virtually everything there was that could be done. He'd "been himself", he'd been "cool", he'd been the kind of guy that Cho told everybody she wanted in a man, he'd been a "man's man" (which honestly was kind of a jerk, and judging by her fewer tears she thought so too), and he'd even tried being what Cho called, repeatedly, during their non-date; the Perfect Man. After he'd roused her from her faint that last time, she'd run off and wouldn't let him near her for the rest of the day. He realized it was more from embarrassment than not wanting to see him, but it came to the same result.

She didn't make it any easier either.

The more he tried to impress her, the more he learned about her, the more time he spent with her, the more Harry realized he didn't really have feelings for Cho anymore. Not that he'd ever been in love with her in the first place, but that youthful infatuation he'd had for her since Third Year had kind of... disappeared. Oh, she was still hot, don't get him wrong, he was definitely still attracted to her, but the more he dated her, the less he wanted to date her.

Finally, he decided to give it one last try. She deserved that much from him for their one real-time date that he had ruined. However understandable, he still regretted that bout of immaturity and wished he could've changed it.

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"Hey Cho, can I ask you something?" Harry said as he sat down next to her at Ravenclaw table during breakfast. Given her penchant for saying no to him, he figured he'd get started early and that way he had the whole day to wear her down.

"Harry? What are you doing here?" she asked, startled.

"I'm here asking you a question. May I ask it?" he gave her a lop-sided grin, which he'd gotten her to admit a few times now that she thought looked sexy on him.

"Uh, s-sure," she flushed a bright red.

"I'm planning on having a private party after my last OWL this afternoon to celebrate Snape's removal from the school. Don't ask how I know, let's just say I have an inside source and leave it at that. My question is this, would you like to come to my party this evening?" he put his face right in hers and almost casually, not that it felt like that to her, brushed a lock of her hair over her right ear.

"Wh-wh-wh-wh-um... Who else is going to be there?" she finally managed to ask him.

He whispered into her ear, "Well, if you say no, my best friends. If you say yes..." he paused to take a breath and let his exhale warm her ear and neck, "... then it would be just you and me. At a... private... party, for just us. So, what do you say?" he sat back and asked her in a conversational tone.

"Harry... I want to, I really want to, but..." Cho started to answer, tearing up. He put his finger on her lips and gave her another lop-sided grin.

"I don't need an immediate answer," he assured her, keeping his finger on her lips, "The invitation is open. I'll wait until after OWLs are over to tell my other friends about it. Just think about it."

He took his hand away, and she gasped a little, her lips parting to speak, but no words came forth. He decided to take advantage for once and stole a quick kiss, using his tongue like he knew what to do with it. That lasted for at least ten or more seconds. When he finally left Cho was panting, squirming in her seat, and flushed bright pink. He was not surprised when, in the middle of lunch, Cho came up to him and did her best to mimic what he'd done to her, and accepted his invitation.

He immediately went to the Room and started getting things ready. He showed up an hour and a half late for the OWL exam, and handed his test in five minutes after sitting down. The vision showed up on time, but Harry was prepared these days with a few select song choices and guest appearances by a certain purple dinosaur and other characters of children's media. He didn't even pause in his preparations at the Room of Requirement, but it did remind him of the time, which is why he went to the test at all. He hurried back after he was done with the test, and once classes were done for the day, he went and collected Cho on her way between her last class and the Ravenclaw dorms.

"Ready for that party?" he asked, appearing at her side as they both rounded opposite corners in the corridor.

"Harry! You startled me!" Cho gasped.

He smiled at her rather than answer and looked to her expectantly.

"Oh, the party! Uh... yes, I think I am..." she blushed and looked down to the ground. "I was just going to get some things and maybe change first but..."

"Trust me," he said, "You're perfect the way you are. Allow me to escort you," he held his arm out for her. She smiled and gladly took his arm. He made sure to keep smiling at her and lead her to the Room of Requirement. She wasn't even aware of where they were until he took his arm back and she looked around to find herself in a dark place with only a single fire providing firelight for the entire room.

"Harry? What is this?" she turned and saw him as she'd never seen nor imagined him before.

It was Harry, he was just dressed in a very strange outfit. He was wearing a maroon and gold-lined smoker's jacket with a silk scarf bunched around his neck where the V of the jacket would have opened on his chest. He was also wearing maroon silk pajama pants and fuzzy bunny slippers.

"Harry?" Cho whispered, feeling out of her depth.

"I'm going to lay it out straight for you, my dear," he said. "I want to give us another shot. I really and truly, sincerely do. But, recent events aside for the moment, I have recently become disillusioned towards the fairer sex, and towards you in particular. So I do apologize for the abruptness of this, but I must inform you that I see no reason to continue dating you, or pursuing a romantic relationship of any kind."

Cho gasped and began to tear up.

"Unless you can show to me, here and now, that you're worth it," Harry crossed his arms and then added, "Now, don't go panicking or thinking the wrong thing of me. This is not me pressuring you for sex. If you are, that's all on you, because what I'm wanting is a real relationship. A true romance. So, we're going to play some games first of all, and once you're relaxed, well, then we'll do some things that you want to do."

"I want to leave!" Cho snapped at him immediately.

Harry shrugged and the door to the Room opened, shining like a pure white gateway in the darkness. "But understand if you walk out that door... we will never, ever be together again, in any future," he warned her even as she started to run towards it. "I will never pursue a relationship with you ever again, because I will have seen that you don't want one. Not with me anyway. This is our last chance Cho. Walk out that door, and we're not just over, we'll never be. Ever."

Harry wasn't even going to pretend he knew what was going through her mind at that moment, but he was entirely serious in his threat. It was the first and last time he would make such a threat to her,

because if she walked out that door, no matter how many resets it took to free him of the time loop, he would never look back to her for a meaningful relationship. She was too much work in the first place, but if she didn't even try? Nothing was worth all that.

Cho closed the doors, and then locked them.

"What do we play first?" she smiled to him in a trembling and pitiful attempt at her own sexy smirk.

"Trivia?" she seemed surprised.

"I don't know much about you," Harry shrugged as way of explanation, "And what you know about me may not be right. So, here's a deck of cards. We each draw one and ask the other person a question. And said person can either choose to answer the question, or suffer a forfeit. The forfeit is written below the question on the card, so there won't be any making stuff up. Also, I'm not out to get you or embarrass you Cho. But if you refuse to answer the question and refuse the forfeit as well, even once, our date is officially over. Understand?"

Gulping, Cho nodded and sat down in front of the deck of cards.

"You can go first," said Harry, sitting down across from her.

She drew a card and read the question, "What is your middle name?" She blinked and did a double-take at the question before shooting him an incredulous look.

He smiled and answered, "I'll do the forfeit, since you actually already know what it is. Go ahead, read the forfeit."

"Uh," Cho adjusted the card so she could read it in the firelight, "Take off your shoes." They were already off and sitting by the fire.

"My turn," Harry grinned and drew a card, "What is your favorite color?"

Cho almost looked relieved and answered easily, "Indigo actually."

Harry smiled at her and said, "See, not so hard, are they? Go ahead." He hoped he wouldn't have to keep encouraging her like

this every single turn. She eagerly drew the next card and asked, "What are your hobbies?"

The game continued in this vein for a while, each of them learning new things about the other, and Harry automatically accepting the forfeit if it was obvious things that she already knew about him. Thankfully it only happened about three more times, because two of the times the forfeit was 'Take off one article of clothing', and the third was to 'Sit beside your opponent for the rest of the game', which neither of them seemed to mind. It also got him out of his bulky robe and tie. And then Harry asked a question that Cho really didn't want to answer.

"When did you first notice your attraction to me?" The card actually said 'to your romantic partner' rather than 'me', but Harry took some liberty and translated it a bit.

"Uh..." Cho looked down and away, drawing Harry's curiosity.

"Uhm, Cho, this wasn't supposed to be a stumper," he said, "You, uh, you are attracted to me, right?"

"Oh, yes! Definitely yes, Harry, yes, I am attracted to you, it's just... uh, I don't know the answer," she said to him.

He frowned and tapped the card against his chin, thinking. "Care to guess? I'll accept a guess. Because, you know that you have to answer, and 'I don't know', whatever philosophers say, is not a real answer. No answer means an automatic forfeit."

She shifted her eyes all over the room, but finally looked him in the eye and said, "I'll... take the forfeit."

He was surprised. He liked being surprised after so much boredom recently. Although it was very little surprise and it didn't last long as he read out the forfeit, making sure the card was so she could read it with him if she chose to do so. "Kiss the one asking the question."

She blushed and smiled at him, "That's not such a bad forfeit," she said and then they kissed.

They were both breathless after they were done and Cho needed to be reminded to draw the next card. Harry answered the question

easily enough, and then asked Cho a question. The way her eyes bulged out, he re-read the question and didn't think there was anything too bad with it; "Share one private thing that no one knows about you." Harry expected he would actually have more difficulty answering that question because apparently there was very little that no one knew about him.

"Uh, I'm going to forfeit that one too," she blushed even as she said it.

He frowned at her, actually wanting this game to work the way it was supposed to, not as another way to get free sex or whatever. "Remove one article of clothing." Cho removed her outer robe.

They went back and forth for a while. Most questions, which were basic trivia like those first few, and Cho had no problems with those at all. There were no more 'easy' questions however, ones where she already knew Harry's answer, and he preferred answering the questions in hopes of getting her to, so he wasn't forfeiting much anymore. She, on the other hand, any time the questions got the slightest bit personal, always forfeited. And she was running out of decent options.

"Cho, for real? You don't know if you ever had an imaginary friend? Even I had an imaginary friend!" he was starting to wonder about this whole deal.

She just shrugged at him and wouldn't meet his eyes. "Just read the forfeit, Harry."

He stared at her and sighed. When he read the card, he looked back up at her and quietly rubbed his thumb over the bottom half of it. He then read out loud, "Do a striptease and/or lap dance. You may get dressed after you're done."

"WHAT? It doesn't say that!" she exclaimed. He handed her the card.

She blinked owlishly at it and then examined the card in detail, end over end and even took her wand out and cast a few diagnostic spells on it. Once she was satisfied, she turned redder than ever and still couldn't meet Harry's constant stare.

"Rule still applies," he told her, sounding as annoyed as he really was, "If you refuse the forfeit and the question, the date is over with. Now if you want to quit the game and play something else, that's fine. But you still have to either answer the question, or pay the forfeit. Which is it going to be, Cho?"

As answer, she stood up and walked over to in front of the fire. Music, pounding and tribal, began to emanate from the walls. Cho, slowly, began to move in time to the music. Harry blinked, and then settled in to enjoy the show. The girl may be private, but she was full of interesting surprises, he had to admit.

She was just swaying from side to side really, her hands sort of rubbing her stomach or her chest like she didn't really know what to do with them. Harry didn't say a word and just kept watching. Finally the tempo of the music changed subtly and Cho's movements changed with it. She kicked off her shoes and her hands started to move in more interesting ways. They would rub and press against her breasts and nipples, and started move a bit more South, rubbing her thighs as much as her chest. He also noticed that her breathing had shifted, like she was getting ready to run a marathon or have sex or something.

Having now had sex, multiple times with multiple partners, Harry now knew what that meant.

Cho, thanks to the other questions, didn't actually have much left on. She just had her shirt, skirt and underwear and while shoes didn't count as clothing, he'd said, stockings did, which is why she'd still had her shoes on until a few seconds ago. She started to unbutton her shirt, undulating her body like she was trying out for a belly dancer competition. With each button, more of her Asian skin was revealed in the shadows of the firelight, and things were getting more interesting. Finally, the shirt was open all the way, but teasingly, Cho grabbed both sides of the shirt and held it closed and half turned away from her audience of one.

She bent at the waist and started to grind in the air before standing tall once more and then started to sway and rub hands all over herself again. It was more interesting to watch this time as the shirt wasn't as in the way as before, and Cho's baby blue bra gave her some eye-catching cleavage to work with, especially when she started pinching her nipples. Suddenly the tempo changed again

and Cho practically ripped her shirt off and threw it to the ground behind her.

Harry, his wand lying on the table, end pointing towards the fire, twitched his fingers slightly, and in response his wand rolled just the tiniest bit. Cho's shirt, however, seemingly on its own, crawled into the fire.

Cho now stood before him, grinding a lot, in just a bra, skirt and panties. He wanted her out of the skirt. Like she had read his mind, she unzipped the offending article and let it drop where she stood in front of the fire. She stepped out of it and didn't even notice as her only other remaining article of clothing, including the robe and other items from before, went up in flames behind her. Cho stalked forward until she reached Harry, and then she quite eagerly straddled his lap. He shifted to get more comfortable.

"Harry," she whispered, "I don't want to play this game anymore. Can we do something else now?"

"What did you have in mind?" he asked, as if he didn't already know.

She kissed him and ground her panty-clad self against him. He ran his hands all over her and divested herself of her last remaining articles of dignity. Honestly, he expected it to take a round of strip poker and maybe Spin-The-Bottle to get her this riled up. He did that thing he knew she liked, kissing-licking-biting against her neck, making her cry out in passion. A bed appeared right across from them where his chair had been earlier.

He stood up, holding the naked Ravenclaw in his arms and wrapped her legs around him as he grabbed his wand and vanished his clothing. He carried her to the bed and proceeded to ravish her.

"You know, that wasn't exactly what I had in mind with that game, right?" Harry asked her some twenty, twenty-five minutes later.

"Mm, yeah, but I wanted to make sure that you wanted to stay my boyfriend, and all the girls talk about how this is really the only way to make sure of it," Cho admitted, snuggled up against him.

"In normal circumstances, I would probably agree with you," he said, "but these are highly unusual circumstances, let me tell you." He

sighed and made a decision. He could do with some stress relief and sex never got boring, at least he hoped to God it never got boring!

"Cho, I need to tell you something, and I need you to be extremely Ravenclaw about it, all right? That means, to my Gryffindor mind that you need to be extremely smart and intelligent about this, and I need you to be very honest with me. Can you do that?"

"O-OK, Harry," her voice trembled a bit, "Wh-what do you need?"

"First off, a few facts to establish a baseline for what I'm suggesting, all right?" When he felt her nod, he continued, "Magic throws about half of logic right out the window. Things that are not normally possible or even feasible are practical when it comes to magic. There is also quite a lot of magic out in the world that no one, not even people that spend their whole lives studying it, can understand. And the two of us, as students, would understand and be able to explain some magic phenomenon even less accurately than those experts could, and even those experts would have difficulty with what I'm about to tell you. Understand so far?"

"All right, I can understand and accept that," Cho said, sounding like she was in class answering a question. Harry allowed himself a brief fantasy of what kind of class had the students naked and rubbing up against the professor, but he digressed.

"I am stuck in a time loop. I do not yet understand how it came to be, or why I'm the only one affected. What I do know is that it lasts for one exact day, today as you can imagine. From 7 till 7, twenty-four hours. I've honestly lost track of how many days it's been and neither of us need to know how long right now. How are you doing so far?"

"..." Cho was just staring up at him, blinking every few seconds.

"Before you get all huffy, yes, I've slept with you before, and yes, at those times I've kind of tricked you. But like I said before, that was not my intention this time. I want a real relationship, Cho, not just sex. I want a real girlfriend, who is also my friend for that matter. You can understand that... right?" he was starting to get a bit nervous from her silence.

"... Not... not really," she admitted honestly. "You... you said that you wanted to ask me something?"

"OK, well, might as well get it over with, right?" he sighed and ran his free hand through his hair before looking her in the eye and asking, "I need to know what it is I can do that will get you to accept... this," he gestured at their naked selves, "... level of relationship from me? Imagine this day never happened. At breakfast, where I invited you to a private party, instead of that, what could I have done to get you to be my girlfriend right then and there instead of having to wait the whole day to get to this point?"

"Harry... I..."

They spent the rest of the reset fucking like bunnies, and he discovered that the technique he used to blur, channeling magic into his body, was also a great way to increase his stamina and get a few screaming multi-orgasms from Miss Chang's nubile young body. When she begged for him to stop, all he did was start kissing her all over and then introduced her to different positions and anal sex and everything else he'd 'learned' from the Ravenclaw and Slytherin dorms.

He was still doing her doggy style, continuing a seemingly five-hour-long orgasm and finally came himself when the reset ended and he woke up in his bed in Gryffindor tower.

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Cho was a mistake, Harry now realized. From the beginning, she was a mistake. If she was ever anything at all, it was only a small crush, and it was more than clear to him now that they were never going to work. So that left him with no clue as to who he was going to date or fall in love with to end this time loop. Harry was brooding over this in the Common Room, when Hermione came down the stairs with her pile of history books to prep for the OWL this afternoon.

Harry frowned a little deeper as he took a closer look at his long time friend.

Why not? he asked himself.

She's your best friend! Like a sister! his conscience argued back.

She's hot! his libido piped up.

Plus, I don't have a sister, the closest thing I have to a sibling at all is Dudley, and I wish he was dead, he said to himself.

Like Ginny! She's like Ginny, who is your best friend's sister, Ron's sister! his conscience countered immediately.

Ginny's hot! his libido countered just as quickly.

She's Ginny! Ron's SISTER! his conscience roared.

She's hot! his libido insisted.

Yeah, well what about Luna then? his conscience argued.

Luna's a wildcat in bed and hot! his libido vividly recalled some specific memories.

So... why not? he asked himself again, staring as Hermione poured over the books in front of her. She absently scratched an itch on her thigh, unknowingly raising the hem of her skirt and flashing Harry, the only person looking at that moment, a lot of leg.

The conscience rests! his conscience threw in the towel.

Oh yeah! his libido fully agreed with his new objective.

But how do I get Hermione to even consider romance, with me during the last day of OWLs? he asked himself.

...

He was at a complete loss.

Hermione then brushed back her hair, exposing her face and neck and Harry gulped. So he was attracted to his best friend. His female best friend. Who he had known for years. And hadn't felt a moment

of attraction to in all that time, only to all of a sudden feel like that time he'd first seen Cho on a broom in his Third Year. Over seeing her study!

All right, he liked her, that much was confirmed. And he hadn't taken any love potions or anything, so it was definitely him that was feeling the attraction. Now what?

Be yourself.

OK, well, why not? At least when Cho had turned him down like that, she felt bad about turning him down.

. . .

Problem was, if he was 'being himself', he 'himself' didn't like Hermione that way. Ah, screw it, he was in a time loop, if it didn't work, he could try again tomorrow. Hopefully.

Walking up to Hermione, he sat down across from her and pulled the book away from her. Her eyes followed it until he snapped the book shut, snapping her out of her reading stupor.

"Huh? Harry? Why did you do that?" she asked, surprised and working towards outraged.

"Hermione," he gave her his sexy smile, what he privately thought of as his lop-sided grin. "Have I ever told you how pretty you look?"

She blinked and looked at him like he was crazy. Then she registered what he said and blushed prettily.

"No, in fact you have not," she answered, grabbing another book from the stack next to her. Harry moved the stack out of her reach and snagged the book from her fingers.

"You are in fact quite beautiful, Hermione Granger. You are one of the prettiest witches at Hogwarts," he told her.

She pursed her lips, her cheeks still red. Something had changed though, Harry could feel it.

"What do you want?" she asked, sounding frustrated, mad, and a bit disappointed.

Harry arched an eyebrow, curious at the reaction. He decided to go with it, answering, "I want you to go on a date with me after the test this afternoon. To the Room of Requirement."

She blinked and did a double-take at him. "What?" she sounded stunned now.

"Well, you asked what I wanted," he said, sexy smile in place.

"But, what, you... wait, what?" she finally stopped and asked again, more intently this time.

He leaned closer, still smiling, and repeated, "I want to go on a date with you after the test. To the Room of Requirement. Will you go on a date with me, Hermione Granger?"

She shot him an incredulous look for a moment and then started closely examining Harry, but not in the way he wanted her to. "Harry, are you feeling all right? Any bouts of dizziness or odd tastes in your mouth? Sudden mood swings?"

"Not really," he said, struggling not to laugh while she held her hand to his forehead and then neck and throat. "As for how I'm feeling, well a bit ticklish at the moment."

"How odd," she muttered, taking off his glasses and looking directly into his eyes, but clearly as a means of detecting anything that was not as it should be, rather than a romantic gesture of any kind. She then started taking his pulse and looking into his mouth and examining his tongue. "I don't see any of the classic signs, but the symptoms are unmistakable."

"Uh," Harry withdrew his tongue long enough to ask, "symptoms for what, exactly?"

"Why, a love potion of course," she told him in a matter-of-fact manner, "It's clear to me that someone, probably Ron or one of the Twins rivals doused you with a love potion keyed towards me, probably to humiliate one or both of us. Perhaps even to cause you to fail the test this afternoon! We should tell someone..."

"Hermione," he grabbed her hands and put her back in her seat. "I'm not under a love potion. Why is it that's the first thing that occurs to you when I tell you you're pretty? For that matter, what was with that reaction where you asked what I wanted?"

She bit her lip, and Harry had to actually restrain himself from trying to kiss her right then and there.

"Well, it's just... Ron usually tries to butter me up before asking for various favors," she told him.

Harry frowned. He knew that Ron and Hermione's relationship towards each other was... tenuous at best, but the way she said the word 'favors' just then made him... suspicious.

"Why kind of favors?" he asked.

"Usually doing his homework for him," she huffed, and Harry breathed a sigh of relief he hadn't known he'd been holding. "Sometimes other favors that are... well, annoying more than anything else. Leaving him alone at odd times. Going to get things that he 'forgot' or even to get things he was too lazy to get on his own."

Harry thought back and actually remembered a few of those times. He also remembered every one of them had been right before he and Ron had a talk about private matters of one sort or another.

"All right, so if you're not under the effects of a love potion and this isn't a prank of some kind..." she bit her lip again and then asked, "Wait, are you serious?"

Harry blinked, surprised by another unexpected reaction. It was actually quite refreshing to be surprised so many times during a reset.

"Why would you think I was playing a prank? And why wouldn't I be serious?" Harry asked her, wondering if there was something going on with her friend.

"It wouldn't be the first time, and... I'm not exactly pretty," she whispered, her eyes lowered and her hair hanging down over her face.

Harry wondered if he should stop now and save all these surprises for days when he was really, really bored.

"OK, I'm sorry, and I'll do this the right way another time, but I can't just sit by and let this go on," he said and grabbed her by the wrist and pulled her to her feet and out the portrait hole, and then down the hall to the Room of Requirement. Once inside, they found themselves in what could have been either a psychiatrist's office, or somebody's parlor. Save for the standing mirror positioned right in front of the couch.

"Harry, what are you doing?" Hermione demanded, not letting him take her a step further.

"Like I said, I'll do things the right way tomorrow, but for right now, I need to understand," he told her, getting behind her and pushing her by the shoulders to the couch.

"What? What do you need to understand?" she argued, not fighting her nearly as hard as she truly could.

He put her in front of the mirror, which really was an ordinary mirror, and told her as they both stared at her reflection, "I need to understand why it is that you can't see yourself for who you truly are. You are beautiful Hermione, and I'm not just saying that because I'm your friend. I truly believe you are a pretty and beautiful young woman. But I now see that you also truly believe that you are not. I want to know why that is."

"Because I'm not! Just look at my hair! My teeth! The rest of me!"

Harry frowned and sighed. "That's just my point, Hermione. I am. For the first time since I've known you, with a few exceptions that don't even matter, I'm looking at you and you want to know what my first, unbiased thought is? You. Are. Hot."

Hermione looked like she'd just been pole-axed. "What?"

"Here, let me show you," Harry pulled out his wand, not quite trusting his wandless magic to this degree just yet, "Evanescio!"

Hermione's clothes vanished.

"HARRY!" she turned and slapped him, covering herself up as best she could, though he wasn't sure why, he left her bra and knickers alone. And while he already knew it from past resets, he did have to admit that the black sheer lace was... wow.

"What do you think you're doing?" she screeched, struggling to get away from him.

"Honestly? In short, I'm trying to help my friend. Long version," he grabbed her by the shoulders and bodily turned her around to face the mirror, "I'm trying to understand how it is that you think this! This beautiful sexy young woman is... well, not! Look at yourself! I mean, really look at yourself, Hermione."

"I'm too skinny," she whimpered. "And my hair is a mess and my teeth are too big and nobody likes me!" She started crying, still trying to cover herself with her arms.

Harry sighed and rubbed her shoulders comfortingly, like he had a dozen times before whenever Ron said the wrong thing at the wrong time. "Now we both know that's not entirely true. I like you. I like you plenty. And I especially like how you look right now."

"Harry! Prat!" she slapped him again, but missed his face so settled for his arm.

"It's true," he grinned. "Fine, we'll do this a different way then. Define a beautiful woman, your age. Just generic features, nothing too specific."

"Can I put some clothes on, please?" she whined.

He just shot her a look in the mirror, prompting one of her insufferable sighs. "Define what make a young woman beautiful. And not the esoteric, kind and gentle fairy tale stuff your parents have probably told you. Outright, what do you believe a man, or even other women find attractive in a young lady such as yourself? Be extremely critical here."

"Fine," she let out another sigh and began to recite all the things wrong with herself by listing the comparison she and the other girls in her dorm often made about why none of them had boyfriends. "Long legs, smooth skin, large breasts, flat abdomen, hourglass hips, long silky straight hair, usually blonde, blue eyes, a button nose, small mouth with big lips, and flawless smooth skin. And no body hair below the neckline."

"Yeah, uh, who told you all this?" Harry asked, curious in spite of himself as, realistically speaking, that kind of woman would actually be a turn off for him. Not via individual features, but all of that put together doesn't exactly paint a pleasant image.

"No one told me exactly, it's merely what I and the others have observed men tend to be attracted to," she replied.

"Care to name one person, of any age that actually comes close to matching that description?"

"Uh, well, um..." Hermione bit her lip and began to think it over very intently. Finally the proverbial light bulb went on and she said to him, "Oh! Luna actually fits that profile. Except for the large breasts."

Well, considering she had been jumped up from option four to three recently in people he was going to try dating from now one, Harry had to give her that. But still, he had a point to make.

"Yes, and she's just swimming in potential suitors now, isn't she?" he sarcastically remarked.

"Yes, well, you asked, didn't you?" she huffed at him again. "Can I put my clothes back on now? Please?"

"First, let's discuss some reality versus rumor," he directed her attention back to the mirror. "First thing, long legs. Won't argue with you there, although some guys do prefer being taller than their girlfriend, I do also happen to be a legs man, so again no argument there. I would, however, like to direct your attention downward. Look at your legs. You keep them shaved, moisturized, and in decent shape. Considering all the stairs we climb daily, that's not a surprise. Here," he waved his wand, keeping the image of what he wanted clearly in his mind and conjured a very basic, non-transparent silk

stay-up thigh-high stockings directly onto her legs. "Put them in a pair of stockings and what do you see?"

"I see..." Hermione was about to say something disparaging, Harry knew it, so he interrupted her.

"Don't look at the whole image. Look only at the legs in the mirror. Don't look higher or behind them. Look at their shape, form, see how the silk conforms and highlights the curves of the muscles under the skin," he made a few more silent gestures with his wand and the solid black stockings transfigured into some fashionable fishnet variety he'd seen in a TV advertisement of all things last summer, they showed in between segments of the afternoon and evening news.

Looking in the mirror himself, he could see Hermione blush and adjust her footing a bit here and there, showcasing her legs to herself. Once he was quite certain that she had gotten his point, he moved on.

"Moving on," he said, "Big boobs, flat abs, and the whole hourglass figure myth might get a guy's attention, but only in a passing fancy. If we're talking full on relationship, the saying goes, 'more than a handful is too much' and from what I've seen that is very true. Flat abs don't exist, not on women. They either have a six pack, like men do when working out, or they have a healthy amount of pudge, like you do," he reached around and ran his hands up and down and across her waist.

"If anybody has a truly flat stomach, they're either lying, covering it up, or had something done to them that will make them look unnatural, and that more than anything makes a woman look ugly," Harry told her, removing his hands.

"Moving on to the big thing that you seem to be really hung up on," Harry put his hands around her face, "Hair. And there are as many guys that like as many different hair styles and types as there are styles and types! Guaranteed. Yeah, you looked pretty great during the Yule Ball last year, but you also spend roughly half the day straightening your hair out. I've heard and seen from some of the girls at this school, where curls are just as popular, if not more so than straight silky waves. I do believe it's called a perm. For some women, it looks good on them, really good. On a lot," he shrugged,

"not so much. You just so happen to be one of the rare ones where it looks good both ways."

"Harry, stop lying," she was emphatically shaking her head, yet she spoke in only a whisper.

Harry thought back to some of the hairstyles he saw either on TV, or on the covers of those magazines his Aunt Petunia had all over the house. He pocketed his wand and put his hands in her hair. He closed his eyes and focused on the magic and those pictures and what he wanted done. It took longer than he wanted, but from Hermione's gasp of surprise, he could tell it was working. When he opened his eyes, Hermione had a full on perm. It was still her hair, he hadn't changed any of that, no transfiguration at all, just an improvised charm that there were no words for.

"Harry... how did you...?" she started to ask, but he moved his hands down to her shoulders and applied similar charms to her bra and panties, changing them to identical copies of items that he was sure would cost more than 500 quid a piece. He re-summoned/conjured her shoes back, and then transfigured them, after picking them up and holding them in his hands, into three-inch black strap-back heels and then gently but firmly placed them on his friend's feet.

"Now take a good long look at the girl in the mirror, Hermione," he whispered, standing off to the side now. "And tell me she's not the most beautiful and sexy young creature you've ever seen?"

Hermione was speechless. She stared at her reflection in the non-magical mirror for over a quarter of an hour, sometimes adjusting herself and posing and examining every detail of her current appearance. It was more out of stunned disbelief than any kind of vanity, Harry could tell. Not that he wasn't enjoying the show. And then Hermione burst into tears.

He was behind her and holding her in the next breath. They spent the rest of that reset, which was the entire rest of the day, there in the Room of Requirement, Hermione crying off and on, Harry asking her questions about her life and why she thought she didn't deserve to look beautiful, as he knew she was. He learned more about his friend in five hours than he did in five plus years. He almost felt ashamed of himself, until she revealed that she never told anyone the things she was telling him now, not even her parents, no one. By

supper time, Harry was sharing as much with her as she had him, and he even afforded her the opportunity to be even, although she permanently vanished all of his clothing, so none of it could be summoned back, not even by her.

By midnight, they were making out. They slept in the bed, both as naked as the day they were born, napping for a few hours. Waking up at three in the morning, they just lay there and started talking about things, like they often did when studying in the Library or Gryffindor Common Room. An hour into it, they were making love. By the time of the reset, they were making love for the twelfth time and both climaxed at the moment they both vanished from each others arms.

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Walking up to Hermione, he sat down across from her and pulled the book away from her. Her eyes followed it until he snapped the book shut, snapping her out of her reading stupor.

"Huh? Harry? Why did you do that?" she asked, surprised and working towards outraged.

"Hermione," he gave her his sexy smile. "Have I ever told you how pretty you look?"

She blinked and looked at him like he was crazy. Then she registered what he said and blushed prettily.

"No, in fact you have not," she answered, grabbing another book from the stack next to her. Harry moved the stack out of her reach and snagged the book from her fingers.

"You are in fact quite beautiful, Hermione Granger. You are one of the prettiest witches at Hogwarts," he told her.

She pursed her lips, her cheeks still red. Something had changed though, Harry could feel it.

"What do you want?" she asked, sounding frustrated, mad, and a bit disappointed.

"The truth, or what you want to hear?" he asked in turn, still smiling at her.

"The truth, always," she said, turning her attention back to getting her book back.

Harry kept them away from her and answered, "The truth is... I want you to go on a date with me because you are one of the prettiest witches at Hogwarts. And not to worry, after the OWL exam this afternoon. At the moment, just on a date. Nothing more. And not just as friends either. I want you to go on a date with me because I'm a boy and because you're a girl. That is the truth."

He waited for a second and took a breath, "Care to hear what I was going to say if you chose the second option?"

"..." Hermione just stared at him, her eyes blinking owlily.

Harry sighed. "So much for doing it the right way," he mumbled.

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Hermione, Harry decided, was too much work.

Not that he wouldn't instantly consider a long-term relationship with her the very second this time loop was over and done with, but she had some pretty serious hang-ups about her appearance, and short of getting her to confront them, via the blunt force approach, there was really no way to get her past them. And things got... troublesome at several points if they didn't.

Considering he literally had only a day in which to enjoy his relationship with her, it was simply too much work. Not that he wasn't prepared to do a little work, daily in fact, because in all honesty she was definitely worth it, but it was as bad as his relationship with Cho had gotten with the Ravenclaw party and the other subsequent dates he tried to get her to go on. With well over expectations on rewards in the end, but it would drive him crazy if every single day turned into a full on drama of confronting a teenage girl's hangups about her appearance and getting her to fall in love

with him over and over again. He'd fallen in love with her that first night, and he did not want to risk jeopardizing that for anything, which he might if he had to deal with problems and issues they had already 'dealt with' together, several times now.

Therefore, in order to save his feelings, and hers in the long run, without actually ending anything, Harry decided to move on. To his third choice.

To his best friend's little sister.

To Ginny.

Ginny Weasley.

Who had six older brothers, an over-protective mother with a bad temper, and a father who worked at the Ministry of Magic and was close friends with Mad-Eye Moody through the Order. He would have to make sure he didn't make her cry.

Hermione's observations about Luna notwithstanding, he had some... extremely vivid memories of Luna, and like with Hermione, he wanted to preserve his current relationship with her before trying to change things, potentially not for the better. Although, if anything happened with him and Ginny that he needed to take a step back from, she was his next choice.

Why Ginny?

Well, let's go over the reasons, he mused. She's hot. He's seen her volunteer to go with him to the Department of Mysteries more times than he cares to count by now. She's hot. In spite of their 'elbow-in-butter' past, she spoke with him and interacted more with him this school year than any other previous, and the fault of those previous years could be laid at his feet more than hers. She's hot. And over the Christmas holiday, when he was all but having a crisis of identity, she helped him out more than Ron or Hermione could. And she was hot too.

Why Ginny over Luna?

They were both equally hot. He knew Luna was a wildcat in bed, and suspected the same of Ginny. They were both the same age

compared to him, physically speaking, and they both lived in the same area, knew each other fairly well, and both were people he'd like to get to know better, seeing how they jumped into the lion's den with him over and over again. But Luna was a bit on the quirky side, and he didn't want to deal with that immediately after having to deal with Hermione's issues. Ginny, as far as he could tell, didn't really have any issues, so all he would have to work at is getting her to date him, and he had enough experience at that now it would be easy.

"Hey Ginny," he greeted, sitting next to her at the breakfast table.

"Morning Harry," she said absentmindedly, reading the Daily Prophet in her hand while eating.

"Didn't know you had a subscription," he observed.

"Oh, no, it's Hermione's," she answered, swallowing some juice, "She let me have it after she was done with it. No mention of Professor McGonagall or Hagrid, unfortunately."

Harry winced. Not exactly where he wanted this conversation headed. He decided to play the 'Reassuring Guy' card. "Hagrid will be OK," he said. "And they're taking Professor McGonagall to Saint Mungo's in a little under an hour now. She should be fine though. Although I've never really taken a dozen stunners before... Might take her a few days to wake up."

"Oh, well, I'm sure she'll be fine. They have the best of the best at Saint Mungo's. Look how they took care of my dad. He's already back home with mum," said Ginny.

Harry winced again. This was really not where he wanted this conversation going.

Ginny, bless her, seemed to be aware of this, and changed the subject. "So, how are you doing on your OWLs? I remember when Percy was practically giddy about them in his letters to Mum and Dad, sure that he had passed every one of them."

Harry shrugged and replied, "Eh, I aced Defense, that much I'm sure about. And just between you and me, I'm thinking of skipping out on

this afternoon's. Except it always gets the Ministry involved, so I'll probably just try and turn my test in early, get out before three."

Ginny giggled. She had a nice laugh, it made him smile without meaning to.

"Care to go out on a date with me afterward?" he decided the direct approach was better after all the less than romantic conversation so far. Judging from how she suddenly lit up, her eyes and mouth all smiling like he'd just told her she'd won a million galleons, it was.

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"Hey Ginny," he greeted, sitting next to her at the breakfast table.

"Morning Harry," she said absentmindedly, reading the Daily Prophet in her hand while eating.

"I want you to be my girlfriend," he bluntly replied, curious to see her reaction.

She put the paper down, swallowed despite nothing being in her mouth at the moment, and replied, "All right. Can I just ask one question though?"

"Another in fact, if you want to. You can ask as many questions as you'd like," he joked with her a bit.

"Is this a part of a prank? A way to get back at Cho for something? Or are you serious?"

"No, no, and he's my godfather, so not really. I do, however, truly want you to be my girlfriend, and I want to get to know you better. How do you feel about skipping the whole day and spending it with me in the Room of Requirement under protections so strong they may as well be the Fidelius Charm?" he offered, having already gone on several in-castle, and a couple sneak-out dates with her. They were fun and everything, but in the Room, he could be himself, and he really did want to get to know the girl better. She kept surprising him, like Hermione did. Does.

Ginny blinked. Looked all around. Then smiled and nodded at Harry. They grabbed a couple rolls and some bacon on the way out, but still managed to sneak away before Umbridge ever arrived in the Great Hall.

They spent the rest of the reset locked in the Room of Requirement, talking, playing occasional games, and they even dueled each other at one point. It was fun. Around dinnertime, which they were enjoying thanks to the elves slipping in some things for them to eat, Harry asked her the question that had been nibbling at his brain for a while now.

"Gin?" he started calling her that after they reached a certain comfort level, which usually was by the time whatever date they were on started. "We've been going out for a while now, and while I am absolutely loving it, I have to admit, I'm confused by something. I've tried several approaches to you by now, and no matter what approach I do use, you always say yes. I think I even tried being a jerk once and you still came along. And you were strangely quiet during that date. Why is that you think?"

He'd already explained to her about the time loop, and as with everything else, she accepted it at face value. They'd already had several discussions about what he's already done, or some of the truly strange things he's already seen. She was particularly interested in the dates 'they' had already gone out on.

"Harry, I..." she winced, surprising him yet again as that was usually something he did.

"Gin, we're all stuck in a time loop," he reminded her. "And I've seen you fight like a hellcat in the Department of Mysteries more times than I care to count. So even if you tell me that you've been dosing me with love potions, I'm not really going to have too negative a reaction. Today anyway."

"I have NOT been giving you love potions!" she immediately denied. He'd been spending enough time with her by now that he could tell when she was lying. They'd played poker (standard and strip) a few times now, and he knew her tells. And she wasn't good enough to throw out false tells.

"What would make you think that?"

He began to tick the reason off on his fingers, "Dumbledore Obliviated my memory. Snape has been raping my mind when he was supposed to be giving me Occlumency lessons. Dumbledore's been keeping me in the dark about what Voldemort is up to. Cho wanted to talk about Cedric and get closure, NOT be my girlfriend. Dumbledore lied about not being able to get me out of the Triwizard Tournament and left me in just so they could try and figure out who the mole was. And I can't help but remember a certain conversation I overheard one summer between you, your mother, and Hermione about this love potion she used that one time."

Ginny rolled her eyes and half sighed, half growled.

"First off, most of that was Dumbledore, I noticed. Secondly, that story was actually her warning us to never use love potions. She dated this... boy, I can't even remember his name right now, in her Fifth Year and he wouldn't give her the time of day. So she slipped him some love potion and they dated for all of two weeks before she stopped and broke up with him. He did some very romantic things, but he also became unhealthily obsessed with her. And mum may be good with cooking and food, but I've had her potions, for medicine, and they're not that good. Wound up making most of us sick so they still had to go out and buy professional potions in the end. And why am I even defending her?"

"My point is," she growled at him, poking her finger, hard, into his chest, "you approached me, Harry, not the other way around. And from what you've told me, I was not the first. And if we really are in a time loop, then if I was giving you love potions, they either would have worn off by now, or I would have always been dosing you and you never would have gone to anyone else at all. What was your question?"

Harry took the opportunity to enjoy her flushed face and heaving chest. She looked sexy when she was flustered. Finally, he answered her, "Why is it that no matter how I approach you, you're always exactly what I ask for? I've tried seducing you, you happily let me. I've tried taking you for granted, and you let me. I've tried possessing you like some kind of macho jerk, and you practically put the collar around your own neck. I tell you today that I want you to be my girlfriend, you say yes and agree to skip today. Why?"

Ginny let out one last, heavy sigh and sat down on the couch. Harry sat down next to her.

"That... is going to take some explaining," she grumbled.

"I am all ears," he assured her, putting his arm around her shoulders. She tensed up for the slightest of seconds, then sighed and removed his arm.

"Maybe in a few," she said. "Harry, there's something you need to know about me. For the longest time, you could consider me your number one fangirl. As the Boy Who Lived, I mean."

"Understood, not seeing the point, but understood," he interceded.

"Believe me, I was not alone. Pretty much every little girl born in 1982 or after dreamed of one day being Mrs. Boy-Who-Lived and marrying Harry Potter. Luna and I used to have weddings with dollies we made out of twigs, grass and the occasional garden gnome, where each of us married our Harry Potter doll."

"Whoa, I've got dolls that look like me?" Harry interrupted, a little bit outraged.

Ginny just shrugged.

"Damn Dumbledore, bet he's keeping the royalties too..." he growled, motioning for her to continue. She laughed and did so.

"Every night, mum read to me the story book of what happened to you. Complete fiction, I now know, but for a little girl... you were pretty much my dream guy all growing up. And then it was time for Ron to leave for Hogwarts and without even realizing it, we, I got to meet you. I have to admit, having just turned ten years old, I didn't really notice you that much when Mum helped you through the portal to the Platform. Then Fred and George showed up saying that you were Harry Potter. I'm embarrassed to say I kind of went a bit nuts for a little there. I whined at Mum the whole way home after leaving the train station, wishing I could have seen you. Took me over a month to remember that I had seen you, I just hadn't seen you."

"I don't follow," he frowned.

"I saw you in the crowd, I saw you when Mum helped you through the portal, and I saw you when Fred and George helped you put your trunk away. But then you were just another First Year boy, getting to go to Hogwarts when I couldn't. All I really saw back then was a skinny boy in big clothes with messy black hair and old glasses. You were practically invisible at the time, to be completely honest. Like I said, it took me a month to realize that the practically invisible boy I saw in the crowd was the Boy Who Lived. It pretty much shattered most of my illusions right then and there. I think I was crying on and off again for the rest of the year. And then, in the middle of summer, you came to stay with us."

She sighed, and was really blushing up a storm right then. "I couldn't even talk to you. I'm so embarrassed about that now. Oh Merlin! I even put my elbow in the butter one time!"

Harry laughed, and she slapped him on the shoulder. "Stop it! It wasn't... that funny!"

"Probably not, but yeah, you had a crush on me. I'm familiar with the situation," he acknowledged.

"What do you mean had?" she teased.

He smiled at her and pulled her back close. She let herself and didn't pull away this time. "Like I said, I'm familiar with the situation. Had a crush myself once, on Cho Chang. Might have heard about it in the rumor mill."

"Might have," she giggled into his bare chest.

"Took a while. A long while. Longer than it should have taken really, but eventually I got over my crush and realized something very important. When you've got a crush on someone, you're fantasizing about them. Idealizing them in some way where you have a kind of dream relationship with them. Worst part of it is that you can still be crushing on someone even when you have a real relationship with them. But to actually have that real relationship, with genuine, true feelings instead of some kind of fantasy, that changes things. You haven't had a crush on me for years, Ginny. I know this because for the both of us, we stopped having fantasies. You, fantasizing about marrying the Boy-Who-Lived, and me, keeping up the fantasy that

you were like my own little sister instead of my best friend's little sister." He kissed her on the head and held her closer.

"You saw me for me," he whispered into her hair. "Only other girl I know whose done that is Hermione. And probably Luna, although to be honest with you, I don't really know what she sees in me."

Ginny nodded and sighed. She wrapped her arms tighter around the man that she loved. It was time she shared that.

"Harry... I'm in love with you," she said quietly.

Harry blinked and felt something very odd and unfamiliar to him. It was sort of like fear, but more panic-stricken than that, but there was also a greater sense of acceptance, awe, and something more that made him want to tear up and clenched his chest tight. He had nothing to compare it to, so it remained a mystery to him. Besides, there was something much more important that he had to be focusing on too.

"I... I love you too, Ginny," he whispered back to her, his throat tight with emotion.

"But you're not in love with me. Yet," she sighed and snuggled in closer. "That's OK. It's part of being in love, you see," she explained to him. "I've been in love with you since you saved my life, and probably my soul as well, that night in the Chamber of Secrets. I was too young to really see it then, but I see it now. Everything changed for me then. Before, like you said, it was a crush. After that..."

"Yeah, I... I get it," he whispered, not trusting himself to speak.

"No, unfortunately, you don't," she told him, sitting up. "I will do anything for you, Harry. Anything. If you offer me friendship, I'll take that. If you offer me a single date, I'll take that and cherish it always. If you want me to be your girlfriend, I will be the best damn girlfriend you've ever seen or heard about."

She sat up and then repositioned herself on his lap. She pulled open her robe and piece by piece took off the remainder of her clothing. "If you want me to be your lover, I will do my best to love you to the greatest of my ability. If you want me to be your sex toy, I will be content and find joy in every moment. If you want me to be your

slave, I will follow you into the pits of Hell and to the gates of Heaven. I will bind myself in chains at your feet and throw away the key with a joyous smile on my face." She was completely naked by this point.

"And," she held his face between both her hands, "if you tell me that you love someone else and that you will never love me, I will respect your wishes and be happy for you. If you tell me that you never want to see me again, I will cry and I will protest, but I will leave and you would never intentionally see me again after that. If you commanded me to kill for you, or to kill myself for you, I would not even hesitate."

She kissed him and the emotion he could not quantify overwhelmed him and it was all he could do to kiss her back, gently holding her to him by the back of her neck and the small of her back.

She ended it with a wet sound and a panting sigh.

"Love means, to me, that you are willing to let the one you love live freely, even if it means hurting yourself. Love can be painful, but it can be so very wonderful. It means that I would be willing to do anything for you and expect absolutely nothing in return, but would cherish with all my soul everything that I did receive from you, my love." She kissed him again, and he was absolutely kissing back.

"So," she huskily said to him after some time snogging, "in answer to your question, the reason why I accept any kind of relationship you offer me, is because I'm in love with you. And I know you're not in love with me. Not yet. Maybe not ever. But as long as I have a chance, I'm not ever going to say no to you, Harry Potter. Not ever."

They spent the rest of the night making love, and Harry learned every little thing he could about making her scream out his name. Normally, when having sex, he was all about his pleasure, getting the both of them off together and having mutual orgasm and as many as possible. Tonight, he changed.

He catered to his partner's pleasure, bringing her to multiple orgasms through simple exploration of what felt good for her. He kissed her all over her body. He gave her cunnilingus, and did things for her that he or she had read about, but never had the opportunity to try. He gave her a deep tissue massage, like he had for Cho once, but he didn't stop until she literally passed out from too many orgasms. He learned every inch of her body, her ticklish spots, her

most sensitive areas, and every pleasure point that they could discover on her body together.

The moment she tried to turn the tables on him, he pushed her down and was on top of her the moment after and told her that what he wanted from her at that moment was to make her happy and to show her, while he could, how very much he appreciated her. She merely tried to 'fight back' and dared him to make her. They experimented a little bit in bondage, but only in the literal restraining her while he made her cum until she passed out. No role playing or S&M just yet.

Hours later, with only a few hours to spare for the reset, she collapsed, dripping in sweat, her arms and legs like jelly, and she couldn't take a breath without panting or gasping with the effort of it. Seeing that he had exhausted her, Harry lay down next to her and just held her. They fell asleep together in each others' arms and were content.

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"Hey Ginny," he greeted, sitting next to her at the breakfast table.

"Morning Harry," she said absentmindedly, reading the Daily Prophet in her hand while eating.

"I'm about to say something to you that would normally get a very... loud and negative reaction," he whispered into her ear, enjoying the shivers he could feel coming from her body. They had spent so many days and nights together that Harry actually knew her body better than she herself did. "I want you to give me a quiet and simple yes or no response, all right?"

She nodded her head, putting down the paper, but not turning her head from having his mouth so close to her ear and neck.

"I want you to be my sex slave for the next twenty four hours," he waited for a reaction and was pleased with what he got. "Which means that you will do everything I say, without question or hesitation, and always with a prompt and respectful, 'Yes Master' at the end. I am in no way forcing you to do this, and neither will I

spend any amount of time proving I am Harry Potter." He then whispered something in Parseltongue to her, and knew that would be proof enough.

"This is your one and only chance to get out of this, and you need to make a decision right now. Will you be my sex slave for the next twenty four hours, Ginny Weasley?"

Slowly, stiffly, Ginny nodded her head, yes.

"Take off your stockings and underwear, without magic," he put his hand on her back and suddenly her bra was unfastened and the straps were off her arms entirely. "Leave them under the table. Put your shoes back on after you have done this. Finish your breakfast, then tell your classmates that you need to visit Madam Pomfrey and don't know if you'll be able to make it to class. Go to the Room of Requirement. At each floor, leave behind one article of clothing, beginning with your shoes on the second and third floors. If you don't want to get caught... ask me for a favor."

Ginny gulped, already working at removing her stockings and having dropped her bra under the table. She knew, without knowing, that if she asked Harry for this favor, she may regret it later on. Well... regret was such a vague term.

"Har—Master, may I ask a favor of you?" she whispered, her voice trembling.

"Here," he handed her the infamous Invisibility Cloak, "After speaking with your classmates, come back into the Hall under this, go up to the Head Table, right in front of Umbridge and everyone else, and remove all the rest of your clothing. Put it all under Umbridge's chair. After you see me leave the Great Hall, you will have twenty minutes to get to the Room of Requirement before I accio my cloak back." He got up and joined Hermione and Ron for breakfast.

By this point, Ginny was a flaming red, and had finished removing the last of her undergarments and had put her shoes back on. She quickly went to every one of her classmates, both in Gryffindor and in other houses, informing them that she would not be in class at all today, and then quickly slipped out of the Great Hall. Harry knew she'd stepped back in when he felt a cloth-covered hand stroke

across his back. Good timing too, as he had just finished breakfast and informed Hermione that he would meet her at Lunch for last minute revisions. And that if he wasn't there, blame Snape. It really helped hammer in that final nail into Snape's coffin with the Order when all of Harry's friends were pointing the fingers alongside the Ministry and a few others.

Smirking, he waited until he saw just the briefest flash of a bodiless bare foot right in front of the Head Table before getting up and starting a countdown in his head. Thankfully, he was the only one to see the invisible stripper up front, and that was thanks mostly to the fact that he was looking for it at the time. He kind of wished he had Mad Eye's magic eye right then, but he was about to see a whole lot more, so he was not one to complain.

It was the tenth reset in a row where he'd played this sort of game with Ginny. After the fourth day where he noticed how... enthusiastic she got when he trash talked to her during sex, of making his slave display herself for everyone in the school to see, he started a bunch of these exhibitionist games with her. This was the first time that he'd had her strip in front of the whole school, and he was looking forward to what that would do to her libido.

Harry's musings were cut short when he realized he had an unexpected visitor on his walk to the Room of Requirement.

"Is there something I can help you with Luna?" he asked, politely, but indicating he didn't want to talk at that moment all the same.

"I was wondering when you would get around to me," she said, not like the words might suggest, but with the gentle curiosity of a child asking impatiently if it was their turn yet.

Harry blinked and then went over everything he'd done so far yet today. Then he went over everything he knew about Luna, personally or otherwise. "Luna... are you a Seer? Like in Divination?"

"No, not like in Divination," she said, looking up at the ceiling. Harry reached out with his magical senses, which was mostly what he'd read about in a dueling book about how the really experienced duelers tended to develop a sixth sense that let them know when and where magic was being used around them, as well as his

mystical connection to all four elements. Aside from the painting and standard enchantments for Hogwarts, he also sensed some pixies up to mischief, seeing as they'd made themselves all but invisible.

"Just some doxies making themselves Unnoticed, Luna. Nothing to worry about, Hogwarts wards prevent them from attacking students," he assured her.

Luna blinked and looked at Harry and then did something very unexpected. She stopped him with a hand on his arm and asked, "Would you mind stepping into this broom closet with me?"

Harry redirected his extra senses, there was nothing particularly special or unusual about it that he could see. Then he refocused everything he had on the girl, no, young woman before him. "Luna? Did something... unusual happen to you recently? Did you... have you noticed people... events repeating themselves? On a daily basis I mean? I'm not sure how to ask this properly."

Luna pouted a bit, made her look really cute. "I'm afraid you're mistaken Harry. Time is still stuck in a loop, and you're the only one aware of it. I know that today is a time loop, but I'm not in it, I'm sorry."

Harry frowned, but more in thought rather than any negative feelings. "Did I tell you already today? I don't recall doing that recently. Huh. Well anyway, I'm sorry I haven't moved on yet, but I'm actually having a lot of fun with Ginny right now. We're role playing today. She's my sex slave."

"Yes, I know," Luna smiled at him. "Now if you wouldn't mind coming into this broom closet with me."

"Wait, what?" Harry stopped and reran the past minute of conversation again, as well as all his assumptions.

"I want my first time to be special," Luna explained. "And for that to happen, you need to have quite a bit of practice."

"But, but, but..." Harry stammered. She started to pull him into the closet, but he resisted. "Wait a minute. I've got a much better place for this."

He then took her directly to the Room of Requirement, which was already waiting for them. Inside, they both were surprised to see a naked, kneeling, head-bowed Ginny Weasley, her hands bound behind her back by black manacles, the magic-proof cuffs that Auror's, or certain torture-obsessed groundskeepers would have.

"Hello Ginny," Luna smiled softly, her eyes dancing over her childhood friend's freckled flesh.

"LUNA?" Ginny's eyes were wide and her voice went up an octave or two.

"Remain where you are, slave!" Harry snapped out the order, and to everyone's surprise, Ginny's most of all, the redhead obeyed and bowed her head once more. "You are to remain silent and still until addressed by me, and me alone. I will trust you, this once, and not place you under a silence ward, or blindfold you. Do not abuse this trust."

"Yes, Master," the girl whispered, her face and chest flushed red.

"You have her well trained," Luna commented.

"I haven't trained her at all," Harry returned the comment, "I just bring out this side of her, don't I pet?"

"Yes Master," Ginny purred as Harry caressed her face and then forcefully bowed her head till her chin touched her chest.

"Now then Luna," Harry continued his earlier conversation with her, "The first thing you said to me this morning, was a question about when I would get to you. I now also discover that you, without me telling you, already know about the time loop and that I'm the only one stuck in it. I asked if you were a Seer, you tell me, paraphrasing a bit, not exactly. Miss Lovegood, while I do consider you a friend, and potentially more than that, you seem to be under the mistaken impression that I'm still the idiot I was yesterday. I've been stuck in this time loop a lot longer than you probably realize."

He walked around behind the blond and pulled her straight locks back behind her neck, revealing her radish earrings. "I've suspected that you already knew about the Time Loops and that I was looping. Some of your, shall we say, responses were more telling than you

could possibly know. I spent some time in Ravenclaw Tower, and also spent many days by your side. You aren't living through the time loop and the resets like I am, but you're peripherally aware of them."

Luna blinked, as close as anyone had seen her to being surprised in a good long while.

"See, right there, aside from myself, who crafted my own out of sheer necessity and constant repeating, you have the best Poker Face out of anyone at Hogwarts, save Dumbledore himself. And you always were the first one to lose at poker," he said.

"Slave, spread your legs," Harry ordered, turning Luna so they were both watching his sex slave debase herself in front of them. "Put your palms on the ground and raise your hips as high as you can get them. Keep your legs spread! Wider! Good, pet, good."

"Now Luna," he whispered into her ear, gently and carefully taking out her radish earring, "You made a very surprising remark to me just before I brought you here. You also made a very incorrect assumption. Just because you can't remember more than the past ten or so resets, or much rather, your visions, your dreams don't go much further than the past ten resets, don't think that makes you more knowledgeable than me. And don't assume that because it happened more than a few relative years ago, that I've forgotten how to please you sexually."

He removed both her earrings and her butterbeer bottle cap necklace by now and had both hands on her shoulders. He wasn't moving them though and he wasn't going to go any further until she made the next move.

"I've learned a lot since then," he breathed into her other ear now. "If I wanted, I could quite easily make you my pet just like I have with Ginny here. That's not arrogance, or a threat, by the way. That's experience."

Luna gulped. Ginny was already panting and nobody had even touched her, but between watching Harry seduce Luna Lovegood and her current position, she was ready to pop like a bottle rocket!

"I may not have sampled every witch at Hogwarts, yet, but I have reached the point where I'm not looking for free sex anymore," he explained to both of them, walking over to the nearby wall, where several hooks were hung there. He started removing his clothing and hanging it all there. "I want a real, genuine relationship. I want to fall in love, like Ginny is in love with me. Like you apparently are."

Luna just stared back at him, her wide, silvery eyes never leaving his emerald orbs.

"I thought so," he nodded and smiled back, warmly, invitingly. "I care for you Luna. Deeply. More than a friend, that's for sure. But... as with Ginny, I can't say that I'm in love with you yet. All the books I've read say honesty is what makes a relationship work. And I'm not going to start lying to myself and all of you just so I don't hurt your feelings for a short little while."

"M-Master...?" Ginny's arms and legs were starting to shake.

"Stay where you are, pet," he ordered. "Why play these games? Why have sex and play sex games and explore sexuality when I'm looking for love? When I'm the only one to remember it?" Harry put a familiar maroon and gold Smoker's Jacket on over his nudity, and walked back over to the young women. "Why have sex at all then? Answer, because it's a part of any healthy relationship, that is of the romantic variety," he quickly amended his statement.

"Ginny, you won't remember them, but Luna may, out of the corner of her eye. There have been days where I have showered my chosen girlfriend with attention, love, and made her feel like the most special person in the world, like a true princess. There have been days where I've done nothing but talk and connect with her. There have been days where I never so much as glanced in her direction and was spending time with some other girl, another girlfriend. Yes, like Hermione," he said with a sigh.

"Why aren't you playing sex games with Hermione?" Luna asked.

He shrugged, putting his hands in the jacket's pockets. "She doesn't mind snogging and sexual relations, but she's not into role playing, or S&M, or... well, pet here doesn't need a lot of training. If ever it were to happen, Hermione would need a lot of training. You can resume kneeling now, pet."

"Thank you, Master," Ginny panted with relief and moved herself to a more comfortable position, though making sure to keep her legs apart.

"Here, let me get those for you," he said, breaking character for just a moment, removing the magic cuffs on her hands with a wave of his own. They came apart easily.

"Would you like to be my girlfriend, Luna?" Harry asked her suddenly.

"Yes, Harry, but then what would that make Ginny?"

"My sex slave. Our sex slave. You would be her mistress, as I am her master."

"Are you trying to build a harem, Harry?"

"I promise to take you on a real date tomorrow?"

"Answer my question and I will answer yours," Luna smiled at him and then began taking her clothes off in a rather brusque manner.

"I'm trying to find love. But I kind of squared today away for some... relief. I don't do anything but date girls, I'll have you know. I'm practicing and working on my magic to become powerful enough to beat Voldemort," he defended himself. "It's... stressful. Doubly so when I have to deal with this time loop. Never really noticed how much Hermione and Ron argue until they started having the same argument day after day after DAY!"

"I'll take you up on that date, Harry Potter," Luna, a naked Luna, hugged him close and kissed his cheek.

"Good, and thank you. Something for me to look forward to. Try to send a message to yourself about what you'll want to do on the date. I'll make plans accordingly. Now then... I need some much needed stress relief, pet. And like every guy, I've got this fantasy about two girls servicing me at the same time. Get started, pet. Luna?"

"Hm," the girl was kissing her way down his chest, having opened his jacket and slipped it off his shoulders.

"... Never mind, seems I shouldn't even bother asking," he sighed as both girls started licking, kissing and caressing his erection. "How much do you 'remember' from our trysts during the Ravenclaw party anyway?"

Almost as though it were her answer, Luna licked her way to his crown and then swallowed him whole in only three tries. "Oh... bloody hell!" Harry gasped, going cross-eyed at what Luna was doing to him. Ginny wasn't idle by any means either, running her hands all over him, kissing and licking wherever she could fit her mouth. It was all Harry could do to just stand there and try his hardest not to cum!

When she finally let him go, he left her mouth with a pop and looked up at him with her silver eyes wide. She then took him back inside her throat, keeping eye contact the whole time.

"Fuck! Luna! Hell yes you remember! I had to spend six resets figuring out how to teach Cho to do that, and you always picked it up right away! Bloody hell!" Harry groaned, his whole body clenching from the strain of trying not to cum too soon. An idea came to him, in hopes of getting him a slight reprieve.

"Pet! Eat Luna's pussy! Now! Make her cum and cum HARD!" he ordered.

Ginny was between Luna's legs so fast neither was sure if she hadn't somehow teleported herself there. And though Ginny herself didn't have psychic visions of times that never existed and she certainly had never done anything like this before, but judging by Luna's enthusiastic moans she was more talented than most would give her credit for.

When Luna finally had her orgasm, Harry had recovered enough from her earlier assault that he could maintain control better now. He physically picked Luna up and threw her over his shoulder, and then grabbed Ginny by the back of her neck and dragged her behind him, making his way to the large bed that had appeared in the middle of the room at his need for it. Judging by Ginny's squeal and the trail of pussy juice she left behind on the floor, she rather enjoyed this sort of treatment more than either of them had expected.

Tossing Luna onto the bed, he picked Ginny up by her neck, holding her off the ground, thanks to a wandless levitation charm, and then held her up for display. With his free hand, he started groping, pinching, and caressing all of the redhead's charms, while Luna watched from the bed, her legs spread wide, one hand on her clit, rubbing hard, the other on her breast, pinching her nipples.

"What do you think of my pet, Luna? Seeing as you're my new girlfriend, I'd like to have your opinion," he said callously. He'd already learned from Ginny, during one of their 'just talking' dates, that she really got turned on when he acted like he knew exactly what he was doing and didn't care what anybody else thought of him or his actions. Took him a while to remember at the time, but he could recall acting that way during several crisis over the years, the more recent debacle at the Department of Mysteries a prime example.

He reached down and pinched his pet's clit, and then carelessly shoved two fingers inside her dripping pussy. She jerked and spasmed in his grip, her legs and arms twitching uncontrollably as she actually sprayed, she came so hard. So far, Ginny was the only girl he'd had sex with that actually ejaculated, or squirted when she came. He did it twice more, just because he knew he could, and because he knew she wanted him to. She actually came harder each time, screaming out loud and calling him master with each breath.

"Well, what do you think?" he asked his new girlfriend once more, still holding a now limp Ginny, drenched with sweat and female cum.

"I think I want you to take my virginity before I do!" Luna screamed out, in the middle of her own orgasm at the moment, her eyes never leaving the sight of what he was about to do to her.

Harry grinned and gently took Ginny in both arms and lay her down at the foot of the bed. He then crawled to the head and licked and kissed his way up Luna's legs, to her center, past her navel, between her small yet perfect breasts, nibbled on her neck and earlobes for a few moments before drawing her into a soul-searing kiss that left them both gasping for breath. There was then a breathless moment as he drove himself inside of her and they both held still for the longest time.

They both began panting like they were in the middle of a marathon race and only when she indicated that she was ready did he move, and then the tempo took off from there. They made love and paused only to ensure that the joy would continue for long after they were done. After they came together, bringing each other an overwhelming bliss and still remaining in the arms of the one they were falling in love with, they coupled many more times.

Harry took them both a multitude of times and in every position and way that the young teenagers could think of, and even some that individually they had never thought of until they had partners to try it out with. Ginny loved it when he took her doggy style. Luna loved anal even more. And neither one of them minded fulfilling Harry's lesbian fantasies right in front of him, albeit they were always more interested in him than each other.

Harry's libido couldn't wait to get Hermione in on this action. Harry's heart, was more satisfied and couldn't believe how lucky he was hours later when he was just laying there, both young women cuddled up on either side of him, all of them naked and not even bothering with the covers. He went to sleep, enjoying the peace, the tranquility, the love he felt. And being naked in bed wasn't so bad actually. It was certainly less constricting than wearing pajamas that could bunch and other stuff when he tossed and turned in bed. He resolved to try that out a bit for the next little while, and then he went to sleep.

AN: I expect I will either get a lot of flames, or lose some readers outright probably halfway through this chapter. There are also, undoubtedly, a lot of questions about Harry's "current" capabilities at this point in the time loop. I hope to be able to answer most of those in reviews and PMs, but I'll try to answer the most glaring here and now.

Yes, this is going to be a harem-fic. Every time loop fanfic that I have read to date, even the ones where there's a "True Love" in the end, have the main character sleeping around with everything that has a XX chromosome.

Ginny is a smoking hot redhead, portrayed by a smoking hot redhead in the films. Long before "Harry and Ginny" started dating in the books, immediately after I'd watched the movie "Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets" and saw how adorably cute and even

a bit hot Bonnie Wright was playing Ginny, I started dreaming up all sorts of H/G shipperfics. BEFORE it was ever even hinted at in the books.

Ginny's "I'm in love with you" speech and why she lets Harry do the things he does with her/to her? I, personally, have never been in a meaningful relationship. But if the girl that I'd been crushing on walked up to me and told me we were now dating, or were boyfriend/girlfriend, or said she wanted to have sex with me, or that she wanted me to be her sex slave, or that she wanted to be MY sex slave... I would take whatever she told me at face value and do pretty much whatever she said. From *this* Ginny's point of view, on the last day of OWLs, after a hectic and very hard year, the night after the whole of Gryffindor House suffered a traumatizing shock, a young man that had been her crush and now was a friend walks up to her and does pretty much the same thing. Now until he tells her the time loop story, most would assume that Harry had "received a wake-up call" with what happened to McGonagall and either snapped, or has 'finally noticed me'. From the amount of fiction (both books, TV and internet) that I've heard of how a teenage girl's mind works, I am going to assume that such an assumption would not be turned away by a girl not currently dating, and suddenly being approached by the guy she likes... Well, you see it often enough in Teen TV Dramas these days.

As for the "underage sex"... take a look at teen pregnancy statistics and tell me it doesn't happen.

Harry's powers are on a steady rise, rather than the sharp up-shots after he made contracts with the Elemental Spirits. By the point of the fight with the Inquisitorial Squad and Umbridge, he's been in the loop, training on and off again nearly constantly, for more than two centuries by this point. He's been looping, learning and trying to improve his magic for at least as long as Dumbledore himself has been alive. Not to mention going to face off against real live Death Eaters whenever he wants to, to test himself and his powers.

I credit Clell65619 and his story "Harry Potter and the Distaff Side" with the inspiration for his "blurring" super speed trick. Some liberties were taken, but that's where I first saw such a "technique" being used in fanfiction that wasn't outright said to be superspeed or some kind of magical creature hybrid side effect. Didn't ask

permission beforehand, but as I said, liberties were taken and this is fanfiction. Ideas spawning ideas spawning other ideas.

In case it hasn't already been noticed, and I disclaimed this several chapters back, some quotes, and a lot of plot outlining has been inspired by Rorschach's Blot's "Groundhog Day" including where Luna tries to drag Harry into a broom closet. Liberties, obviously, have been taken, and as I said, that story has been used as inspiration for this one.

Last thing, and then I'll let you get on to the next chapter. Harry/Hermione. He's falling in love with her, just as much as he's falling in love with Ginny and Luna. It is implied that even while he's "dating" Ginny and Luna, he also, occasionally, goes on "dates" with Hermione. Usually followed by a threesome date that will end in sex with the other two. Harry doesn't try to sleep with Hermione. Not unless she asks him to first. He doesn't trick her and he doesn't manipulate her into liking him that way all the time. He does, occasionally, confront her self-image issues and this involves brutally breaking down all the emotional walls she's built around herself. TV says; when girls get emotional, they get vulnerable, and if the guy is either inexperienced (with romantic relationships) or a jerk, he'll "give her what she wants" and one thing leads to another.

Hermione and self-image issues... Please. Name one girl or woman that DOESN'T have self-image issues. Heck, name one PERSON, male or female, that doesn't have self-image issues.

OK, that's it. Enjoy the next chapter!

Disclaimer: Some of the following scenes were inspired by other author's of HP Fanfic. Most notable would be Lucifael's Unchained and Rorschach's Blot's Groundhog's Day, but since I wasn't getting as much voluntary help in coming up with pranks, I worked with what I had found particularly prank-worthy in others' works. As suggested. Oh, and obviously I don't own or get any credit for mentioning the Smurfs, only reason I did was cause of the live-action movie that came out this year... which I still haven't seen oddly enough. Anyway, Enjoy!

Chapter 10: Crazy

Harry woke up, turned over in his bed, cast a reinforced air-freshening charm at Ron's bed, and then went back to sleep.

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Harry woke up, turned over in his bed, cast a reinforced air-freshening charm at Ron's bed out of habit, and then sat up in his bed and yawned. He crawled out of bed, and considered crawling back in to get some more sleep. Sure, he'd be woken up around noon by Hermione and everyone else, but it was extra sleep. On the other hand, he was getting kinda bored with all the sleeping he was doing anyway. Besides, he didn't understand Ron's obsession with getting as much of it as possible between eating, playing chess, and obsessing over Quidditch.

Harry walked out of his cold shower, rubbed a towel over his unruly hair, and then grabbed his wand on his way to breakfast.

He calmly ignored the spontaneous nosebleeds and spit takes that occurred as he passed various breakfast-goers on his way to his seat at Gryffindor table. He doubly ignored that most of those came from girls already sitting at the breakfast tables.

He sat down at his usual seat, between Hermione and Ron, and called for his breakfast, which appeared a few seconds slower than normal. He briefly wondered what had happened that slowed the elves down, but the thought was out of his head at the first taste of his breakfast sandwich. (He'd started varying his orders shortly into the time loop and the Kitchen had yet to disappoint).

"Uh—er, H-Harry?" whispered Hermione hesitantly.

"Yeah Hermione?" he asked after swallowing. He wasn't about to get yelled at for having manners worse than Ron... again.

"Is-is-is—is something the matter?"

"Hm," he mumbled around his current mouthful, and then swallowed again before answering, "No, not as such. The castle feels a bit chilly for this time of year, but nothing really comes to mind."

"O-oh," she turned her head away, her face bright red.

"Are you OK?" he asked with some concern.

"I'm fine!" she squeaked, nearly jumping up, but restraining herself at the same time.

"Ooo-kaay..." he went back to his breakfast.

"Oi mate," Ron questioned after clearing his own plate, while Harry was still on his first item, "Why're you starkers?"

Hermione and everyone nearby did a near perfect spit take.

"Eh," replied Harry with a shrug, "I woke up this morning and thought about getting dressed, but then I thought, eh, what the hell, right?"

It's actually turning out to be quite a new experience. I think I may start doing this every day."

"Oh," Ron nodded, and then went right back to ignoring his best friends eccentricities, like any good friend would do.

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"GREAT MERLIN'S BEARD!" Harry's shout screeched from the shower stalls in the boys bathroom.

"Harry?" Ron shot out of bed and raced into the bathroom, wand at the ready. Only to immediately regret such actions as he caught his best friend in a situation neither of them ever wanted to be in.

"Ron!" Harry shut the curtain with haste. "What the bloody hell are you thinking?"

"You-you-you screamed—I thought—I thought..."

"I'm taking a cold shower and it was colder than I thought it was going to be," explained Harry, reaching out to the cold stream of water, trying to get used to it.

"Uh..." Ron's brain ground to a near-halt, "...why are you taking a cold shower at seven in the morning?"

"Because the nosebleeds outdo the spit takes if I don't..." Harry mumbled out loud.

Ron's brain came to a dead-stop, "...What?"

"Because I felt like taking one!" he shouted, exasperated. "Now give a bloke some privacy won't you?"

"Er—right..."

"Note to self," Harry thought out loud as he finally got used to the cold water, "never scream while in the shower. Ever again."

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"Harry—why? Why? Why, Harry? Why? Why? Harry—why?" Hermione was begging, banging her head against the wall with every 'why'.

"Why what?" he asked, crossing his right leg over his left knee.

"Er, I may be new to understanding Hermione's meaning, mate," said Ron with much trepidation, "but I'm pretty certain she's asking why you're still naked."

"Oh, well, it's just easier to go through the day with everyone thinking I'm either crazy or the victim of an unusual prank than most of the alternatives. Plus it keeps things interesting. I tell you, I was about to die of boredom there for a while!"

"Alternatives?" Hermione looked up from badgering her already heavily-bruised forehead to stare at Harry with genuine hope. A moment later, her whole face went Weasley-red and she spun on the spot and started slamming her head against the next available hard surface, in this case the heaviest book she was carrying.

"Rather than try and explain it," said Harry as he scratched his lower torso and then switched legs, "I'll just tell you who I'm trying to avoid. Saves time and headaches... For Hermione."

"OK, who then?"

"Umbridge, Snape, Dumbledore, Voldemort, and Cho. Albeit, that last one, I'm only avoiding by staying here in the Common Room rather than hanging around outside."

"All right, most of those I get," commented Ron, "but why the Headmaster and your ex-girlfriend?"

"You wouldn't understand about Dumbledore," remarked Harry with a grimace. He'd learned that the hard way from constantly trying to convince both his friends of the former Headmaster's betrayal of Harry personally and everyone else in the Wizarding World for longer than any would care to imagine. It was too much effort most

days. And short of having him show up with the Minister in tow, it was near impossible to absolutely convince them anyway.

"As for Cho, well, she bursts into tears every time she sees me, and I'd rather avoid that thank you very much!"

"Harry," said Hermione, still facing away, "I can say with absolute confidence that the reason Cho is bursting into tears at the sight of you has changed a great deal since the last time the two of you dated."

"We went on one date! A very, very bad one!"

"Yes, well, I'm not exactly experienced in such matters," if she hadn't already been turned around, Harry and Ron were certain they'd see their friend colored a very bright red at that moment, "but if you were to go on another date, I can hypothesize that your next date would be quite different. And probably a lot more . . . fun."

Harry glanced curiously at the back of Hermione's head, but said nothing. One of these days he really should try to figure out what went on in girls' heads. If he wasn't afraid he'd go insane or worse from the attempt, he might've even made it a priority. Again, if he weren't afraid to go insane.

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"MINE!"

"NO! Mine!"

"Mine! Mine! Mine! Mine! Mine, mine, mine, mine, mine mineminemine—!"

"SILENCIO!" Harry wandlessly cast the spell at the dog pile of scrambling teenage girls. Then he calmly turned back to his dinner, not bothering with glancing back when six more girls from each of the Four Houses joined in the silenced melee.

"What's that about?" asked Ron disinterestedly, doing the proper 'guy' thing by looking anywhere but at the naked man sitting next to

him. Instead he was staring unabashedly at the chick-fight taking place almost right behind them. Oh, there went somebody's top!

"I honestly have no clue," sighed Harry, shaking his head. "But it's why I take cold showers in the morning now. And again before and after Lunch and Dinner."

"Wow, I think Ginny's winning," Ron pointed as his sister ripped the last of the tattered garments from Cho Chang's yellow hide.

"Yeah, she usually does most days," nodded Harry, taking a swig of his Strawberry Daqueri. Gotta love those elves.

"Huh? What's Hermione doing?"

"Hm?" Harry nearly spilled his drink mid-sip as he spun around and watched as Ginny and Hermione squared off at the center of the ring of fighting witches. "Huh. That's a new one. Wonder what... oh, right, Hermione caught me on my way to the shower this afternoon after the OWL exam. Had a funny dream during the test that kind of... er, made things—er, uncomfortable—for certain things—" He'd gotten good enough at his Occlumency now that when Voldemort used his 'Ladies' as hostages instead of Sirius, the 'Ladies' usually trounced Voldemort's vision-Death Eaters hands down... and then started reenacting some memories, with variation, of poker game nights long ago.

"I get it mate," said Ron waving off Harry's explanations. He really wanted to see what happened next.

Ginny's flaming red hair was wild, untamed, and at that moment looked like real fire when one looked into her livid brown eyes. She had scratches along her forearms and a few on her left cheek. Her robes had been discarded, by herself, before the fight even began, but her skirt had been shredded and nearly pulled off. Her sweater was ripped on all sides and was being held up only by a single sleeve and the waist portion, while her blouse was missing half the buttons and one sleeve. She snarled, really snarled, at Hermione, "Back off witch! He's MINE!"

Hermione, almost as a contrast, her hair was as flat as anyone had seen it since the night of the Yule Ball, and her eyes held fear and worry over raw rage, but her mouth was set in a determined straight

line. She was relatively unscathed, save that she had obviously been hit by a couple of unusual curses earlier on. One of them must have been a shrinking jinx that made her clothes about two or three sizes smaller than they should have been, as her blouse and sweater were literally tearing themselves apart at the seams, and her underwear had already been shredded to miniscule pieces that littered the floor here and there, while her skirt may as well have been a cloth belt, though it barely covered what it was supposed to because of how she had positioned it on her slim hips. Her robes on the other hand were hit by some kind of leviosa spell, because they kept flying up, even holding up her arms and pushing against her body in windy ways. She glared at Ginny with her (patent pending) Disappointed Glare of Grave Disappointment, and told her with no misunderstanding to be had, "You're wrong. He's MINE!"

They flew at each other with the power of their magic as both witches and women. It was a furious and down right HOT... er, epic battle between the two as they fought for what they both claimed with equal fervor. And then everything changed.

Harry stood up and stretched.

The fighting stopped and every eye stared, jaws hanging towards the ground, as the focus of their attention was not.

"Girls," Luna Lovegood muttered from the bottom of the dogpile, "I have one word for you; Harem."

"GET HIM!" they all screamed with joyous exclamations.

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"Note to self," Harry thought out loud as he ran through the hallways, this time wearing clothing, "Never wear silk ever again!"

He screamed, the green silk scarf, which was all he'd been wearing other than his wand holster, which only counted as an accessory, trailing behind him. He rounded the corner where Draco Malfoy had been leering over a couple of First Years alongside Crabbe and Goyle. Draco blinked and did a double-take. He briefly considered

asking the lunkheads on either side of him if they had seen what he'd seen, but he didn't feel like an exercise in futility at the moment.

Instead, he stepped out into the middle of the hall and stared after Potter's fleeing ass. Thus, he never saw, nor even knew what hit him as a virtual hoard of teenage witches came screaming around the corner. They ran him down and didn't even bother looking down or back. Draco briefly tried to trip one of the girls running over him, but suddenly her spiked heel came slicing down into his weak flesh. Two and a quarter minutes later, the hoard had trickled down. When Draco finally thought it was safe to get to his feet, a young, but well-developed, Gryffindor First Year came screeching around the corridor and practically bounced her pointed five inch stiletto heels into the back of Draco's knees, both of his ass-cheeks, both of his kidneys, both of his shoulders, and even did a short hop-bounce so she landed both heels on the back of his bleeding skull and hopped back down to the stone floor before resuming the chase behind the rest of the hoard.

On either side of the corridor, Crabbe and Goyle looked down at the mess that had been their boss. Crabbe looked at Goyle. Goyle looked at Crabbe. They both looked down at the mess, and then back at each other.

"Think he's dead?"

"Dunno."

"Wanna check?"

"No, you check."

"Nah, you check."

"Not gunna, you check."

. . .

They both looked down, half thinking they'd heard a noise, but both, albeit a bit slow compared to most, came to the same conclusion at the same time. One of them was going to have to check if the mess had made a noise. Cause if it had, then maybe Draco was still alive

and that would mean they'd have to get him to the Hospital Wing. But that still meant that one of them would have to check him.

"You check!" they both shouted at the same time, pointing at the mess.

"AAAHHAHHH!" Harry Potter came screaming around the corner, no longer bearing his accessory. He casually leaped over the mess that had been Draco Malfoy and kept on running.

The hoard followed shortly after, this time taking three whole minutes to pass entirely, but still with that one well-developed First Year trailing behind, who always made the mess bigger in some way in her passing.

Nobody ever actually checked on Malfoy.

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Harry was walking along, enjoying the unique and ever amusing reactions that everybody was having all around him as he walked past. Turned out that there was still one little bit of taint remaining from his earlier mistakes with magical rituals and after half-convincing Madam Pomphrey that it was because of this that he was walking around naked, she cleared away the last of the traces of some kind of love spell, as in the emotion not a stereotypical love spell, which because of the dark taint was behaving more like a lust spell, along with the taint gone, everyone started behaving more realistically if suddenly there was a naked guy walking around. It stopped the mobs of rabid witches attacking each other and chasing him around at the least.

One thing to be said, he could never guess what would happen from one day to the next, where every girl in the school would be hitting on him, or trying to rip him to shreds, or every guy trying to beat him to a pulp, or help him in escaping the hoard of horny witches. Every day was some kind of adventure, or new experience, or even kind of a let down on some days.

He was still stuck in a time loop and he was still stuck repeating the same day over and over again, but at least he'd found a way to keep

things interesting. Who knew he would come across it just because he was feeling too lazy to get dressed one morning.

"Gah! Potter! Put some clothes on!" Malfoy screamed, covering his eyes after coming around the corner and getting an eyeful of the Full Monty. "You really have gone round the bend, haven't you?"

Harry stopped and listened as half the hallway laughed along with Crabbe and Goyle. There weren't that many Slytherins in the hall at that moment either. Malfoy was winding up for another toss.

"I guess it's true what they're saying in the Prophet then, eh Potter? You've lost it! After this, it's safe to say that everything you've been saying about the Dark Lord being back is just your delusions, early signs that you were going absolutely insane! This is just the final proof then. Professor Umbridge will have you taken to Saint Mungo's before the end of the day! Hah!"

A lot of people were laughing now as Harry just stood there, wearing nothing but flip-flops and a wand holster around his right forearm, listening as Malfoy insulted him again and again. Of course he wasn't actually listening, but trying to actually feel something other than minor annoyance at the boy's antics. While he couldn't, yet, beat Voldemort or all the experienced dark wizards he faced at the Department of Mysteries in a combat situation, he knew that Draco was easy pickings and not even worth the fight that would come from it. He didn't even need to use his wand, his elemental and Animagus powers being more than enough to handle the arrogant Fifth Year Slytherin.

"I wonder if they'll put you next to Longbottom's parents? Heard they've been in the Long-Term Care Ward for years now! Hahahah!" crowed Malfoy.

Harry frowned. There was something other than annoyance, he felt it that time. Anger.

He wondered if he should let Malfoy continue spinning enough rope to hang himself with, or if he should be the bigger man and just walk away. After a very brief debate, he decided to just let it drop.

With a sigh, Harry turned around and started to walk away, but Malfoy was on a roll now and would have none of it.

"Where are you going, Potter? Running away? Or going to pack your bags for the funny farm? I'm talking to you, Psycho!" Malfoy screamed and drew his wand. Harry didn't waver a step from his path. "Oh, I get it now! You've got a date! With Looney Lovegood! Hah! Don't think no one noticed, Potter. She's probably even the reason you dumped Chang, which I don't think anyone ever understood. But it makes sense now. Looney's the only one that gets you now. Both of you totally off your rockers and making each other more insane with every perverted kiss! Bah!"

Harry stopped cold. There was that anger again. More intense this time. Still, not enough to get into a fight over. Luna faced worse every day of the year for the past four years. Surely Harry could last the four minutes it would take to walk away from Malfoy's bile?

"Crazy bint will never get better than somebody crazier than herself, and a pervert to boot!"

Harry started walking again, but nobody was laughing anymore. Well, no one except Malfoy.

"Hey pervert!" screamed Malfoy, "I'm talking to you! Sectumsempra!" A jet of dark violet light shot towards Harry, who hadn't even turned around at the sound of the spell. In fact, his pace hadn't changed one bit.

The spell splashed against his back... and dissipated a millimeter from his skin like you might expect from a Protego charm, but no one had seen Harry do anything but keep walking. Even after getting hit, his steps did not hesitate, slow, or even go faster. Seeing this, Malfoy blew his proverbial top and unleashed half a dozen other curses, no longer bothering with verbal attacks. Still, Harry didn't so much as flinch and just kept walking along, with splashes of curses igniting all around him, but never so much as touching him, or rebounding to other people.

It wasn't that hard to do, in fact the skill behind what Harry was doing was taught to First Years before Christmas Break, it just required skill that even most adult wizards didn't bother cultivating, save for those that were either on the Dueler's Circuit, or became an Auror or went into a similar line of work. Every spell, save for the Three Unforgivables, had a counter. The really, really good duelers

could identify the spell being shot at them and before it had even reached them, flicked their wand through the necessary motions for the counter spell and make it appear as though they were merely batting the spell away. The catch was, you had to know what spell was being cast. Even if it was a variant off a base spell, if you were the slightest bit wrong, the spell was going to hit, no matter how good you were.

Draco Malfoy was not a professional duelist, and he was not that talented at it either. He also, unlike Harry, did not know how to silently cast, and had atrocious control over his magic. Harry, by contrast, had above average control over his magic, if only barely, and had mastered silent and still casting with his wand, and had been working towards wandless magic for years now.

Even on days where everything went to hell and he needed some rest and relaxation rather than dealing with everything in his life at the moment, he kept up with his Magic Control and Elemental Control exercises. Even on days he wore nothing at all, he still practiced and trained his magic, working towards Wandless Magic one of these days. He was usually a bit more careful when it came to the Elemental Control exercises, but he still did them, every day.

Just, not to the degree where he would burn out inside of six months.

His wand was on his arm, not in his hand, but as with everything else, he'd also perfected his Remote Casting. It wasn't as powerful, but so long as his wand was within ten feet he could cast with it just as well as he could with it in either hand. As for countering Draco's spells, well, above average control, even if only barely, was infinitely more potent than the atrocious control the Slytherin put into his curses.

"Damnit Potter! Turn and face me like a wizard! Perverted psycho!" Draco then tried transfiguring the stones at Harry's feet into something, followed by the walls, the curtains, even the suits of armor and the ceiling hangings. The stones at his feet reverted back to normal the moment Harry's feet touched them, thanks to his control over the earth element. The wall and ceiling hangings were held back by the very air between them and Harry. And the suits of armor and walls merely absorbed Draco's spells and did nothing at all, again thanks to Harry's control over the earth element to overwhelm the spells' attempt to change their nature.

Anyone that hadn't already cleared out just stared in stunned disbelief at the entire debacle.

Draco had been worse than ever, and where a normal and clothed Potter might have lost his temper and started a fight, or at least shot back some returning insults, this naked and seemingly insane Potter calmly regarded his abuser before walking away and ignoring everything thrown at him, even dark and dangerous curses! In the end, where Malfoy had set out to humiliate and destroy Harry once and for all, he came out of it looking like a stupid and foolish bully that was in over his head from the start.

Harry decided to find Luna and hang out with her for a while.

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"This is all one big prank, isn't it Harry?" Ron asked him at dinner, looking more than a little freaked out after an entire day of his friend going around in the buff.

Harry blinked and looked up. "Prank?" he repeated, not understanding.

"Going around without any clothes on," his friend elaborated. "The twins never tried anything like that, though I'd imagine them doing it to someone else. Probably a girl, but crazy as they were, they were never suicidal. So... this is all a prank, right?"

"Hm, not sure," Harry answered honestly. "I've never really played a prank before. But now that I think about it... it would be a good idea. What would you suggest?"

Glad to see that his friend wasn't really crazy, he was just playing a prank on everybody, and considered himself pants at it, Ron was greatly relieved, almost slumping down to the floor as the tension he'd been unconsciously building up all day released itself all at once.

"Well," Ron answered Harry, "you can never go wrong with food fights. Those are always fun! But, uh, could you start wearing

clothes again? People are going to think you're crazy if you do stuff like this too often. Especially the whole naked thing."

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Harry nervously looked around. He'd never done anything like this before. Not intentionally anyway. Oh sure, there were the parties in Gryffindor Tower, and the occasional 'prank fight' where everybody threw Zonko's products at each other, but this was definitely the first time he'd ever done something like this, by himself, intentionally, and not as part of some other kind of plot or prank.

Harry was about to perform his first ever genuine, intentional, designed to make people laugh and have a good time, prank.

It wasn't going to be a good prank. Certainly not on the level of the Weasley Twins or his father and his friends, but he was at least certain it would get a few laughs here and there. That was his goal at least.

"FOOD FIGHT!" he got up and threw the banana creme pie, which he'd ordered for lunch from the kitchen. It hit Lee Jordon in the face, someone he was certain would help him out with this prank by reciprocating.

"Well that didn't work out like I'd hoped," Harry mumbled to himself as he was lead away by Umbridge's Aurors, hands and feet bound with magic-sapping manacles. His wand had already been snapped. A moment later, Voldemort's vision hit him, until he suddenly 'stepped inbetween' Sirius and Voldemort and shared his memories of the past hour. The headaches stopped immediately after that.

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"FOOD FIGHT!" he got up and threw the cherry pie, which he'd ordered from the elves in addition to his normal lunch. That way he'd at least have something in his stomach after they took him away. It hit Malfoy in the back of the head, and he went down face first into his own platter.

Harry grinned and looked around, but was prevented from enjoying the moment when a bloodcurdling scream straight out of a teen slasher movie broke the silence of the Great Hall. Everyone turned to stare at the source of the incredibly girly scream.

"Malfoy, was that you?" Harry laughed.

"BLOOD!" she—er—he screamed again, and then fainted.

"Well... that was... different," Harry had to admit as he was lead away by Umbridge's Aurors, hands and feet bound with magic-sapping manacles. His wand had already been snapped. A moment later, Voldemort's vision hit him, until he imagined a screaming Malfoy right next to Sirius in the vision. The vision ended moments later, and before it could resume, Harry made sure to picture, very clearly, a whole choir of screaming Malfoys any time his scar so much as twinged at him. It seemed to work quite well.

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"FOOD FIGHT!" he got up and cast a banishing charm at every pie on every table at Snape, covering him head to toe in all sorts of confection.

"Thank you, thank you, thank you," Harry bowed as much as he was able in his magic-sapping manacles, as the whole school cheered his passing. Even the Umbridge-owned Aurors dragging him away had barely restrained smirks on their faces and carried him off with greater respect than they had yet.

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"FOOD FIGHT!" he got up and threw a charmed (to fly straight to the designated target) pie that landed in Umbridge's face. The entire Great Hall was dead silent for the longest ten seconds of Harry's life. Then somebody down the line where the First Year Gryffindors sat cried out, "Get her!"

The cry was quickly taken up and repeated as many times as necessary, but soon enough, any and all food that appeared on the tables was just as quickly snatched up and thrown at the Head Table. More specifically at the center where the Headmaster's position was sat, and at the cowering witch hiding behind the golden throne. Harry cast a simple 'Accio' and got it out of the way, and pretty soon Umbridge was running for her life amidst flying pieces of food and animated drinks. It was also the first day in over a week that Harry didn't get taken away by the Aurors.

No, he'd caught on enough now to make good his escape when and however he could, so he spent the rest of the day running from the Aurors.

"This isn't working," Harry said to himself with a sigh. "I need help."

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"How to pull pranks?" Sirius questioned through the mirror. "You? Want to know how to pull pranks?"

"Uh, yeah," Harry rolled his eyes, "Why is that so hard to believe?"

"OK, who are you, and what have you done with my godson?" Sirius demanded.

A few hours later, Remus showed up at the school and helped Snape interrogate him after the OWL Exam was over with until the loop actually reset.

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"So why is the concept of me pulling pranks so ridiculous?" Harry screamed at the image of his godfather in the mirror, keeping the man on the defensive.

"I didn't say it was ridiculous, I said it was unexpected!" the wanted felon defended himself. "What brought this on anyway?"

"Well I don't know if you're aware of it or not, but I keep hearing from you, from Snape, from Dumbledore, from EVERYONE, that my father and his friends were the wildest pranksters Hogwarts had seen since the Weasley twins, who happened to have left the school who knows how long ago now... Hm... the Weasley Twins..."

"Harry? Harry? Harry! I don't like that look in your eye..." Sirius cried out.

"Say Sirius, you wouldn't happen to know where Fred and George are staying, would you?"

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"Wow. Guess a thousand galleons goes a long way," Harry said aloud as he looked up at Weasley's Wizarding Wheezes on Diagon Alley. There was an actual queue to get in the store. That it was long enough to go around the corner and halfway to the next was incidental to the fact that there was an actual queue to enter a shop on Diagon Alley at all.

Thankfully, Harry was wearing his Invisibility Cloak, dead useful in sneaking out of Hogwarts before nightfall, so he just ignored the queue and walked straight in the Out door and quickly tracked down both of the Twins, who were at the center of attention, one doing a demonstration of their various products, the other working the cash register. Harry watched them trade place several times, most likely so they each had a turn "having fun" with their merchandise. He briefly wondered why they hadn't just hired somebody to do it, but from the looks of things they hadn't been opened all that long now and they probably couldn't afford it. Either that, or there wasn't anyone actually willing to work that closely with the infamous Weasley Twins.

He wanted to wait for a lull in the crowd to reveal himself and ask for their help, but if he was honest with himself he knew that wouldn't be happening any time soon.

So right before their next switch, Harry dramatically unveiled himself from beneath the cloak, standing right in between the Twins, and then grabbed them both around the neck and shouted as loud as

possible in the noisy store, "HARRY POTTER ENDORSES WEASLEY WIZARDING WHEEZES! COME ONE, COME ALL AND SHOP WHERE THE BOY-WHO-LIVED BUYS ALL HIS SUPPLIES!" There was a sudden rush for the shelves.

There, he thought to himself, that should be a good 'audition' as far as pranks go.

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"You two got a minute?" Harry whispered to the stunned redheads. Or rather, tied up, as he had them bound and stuck to a couple chairs he was standing inbetween. It was only 8 o'clock, a good hour before the store was due to open anyway.

"For you Harry—" the one in his left arm said.

"—anything," the one in his right arm confirmed.

A few minutes later...

"Let's get this straight," Fred said.

"You want us—" George said.

"—to teach you—" Fred continued.

"—how to prank people?" George finished the question.

"Why is that so hard for people to believe?" Harry asked in reply.

"You're Harry Potter," George said, as though that had all the answers.

"And my father was James Potter, aka Prongs of the Marauders," Harry crossed his arms expectantly.

"Fair point," Fred said to George.

"And a valid one at that," George said to Fred.

"Well?"

"We're thinking," they said together.

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"Now then, our wayward apprentice," said Fred to Harry, who was kneeling and working his ass off at cleaning the Twins work room beneath their shop. "I'm sure you're wondering why it is that we will not allow you to use your no doubt quite impressive magic to clean this place of genius."

"The thought had crossed my mind," he admitted, meanwhile hissing at some snakes to talk them into chasing and killing some of the rodents he'd already come across down here.

"Well, why should we have to suffer and work to gain our way onto the ignoble path of the prankster and then just hand you all of our best tricks and gags, free of charge? Hm?" said Fred.

"Should I be worried about where George is right now?" asked Harry, growing concerned that he only had one twin to deal with at the moment.

"Most definitely, but only if you manage to escape me, my apprentice," said Fred, cackling with dark amusement.

"That is gonna get old... but it's better than the alternative," admitted Harry and he proceeded with cleaning the work room at a redoubled pace. He was finished in less than half an hour and polishing the last of it to a mirror shine just as George was walking in with what looked like bags of soot. He stopped, stood, and stared with his mouth hanging open in awe alongside his twin.

"How...?" was all he could say.

"How did I get it done so fast? How could I do it at all? How could I get it done without magic? How did I finish before you could subtly sneak in more dirt for me to clean as part of a beginner's prank?" clarified Harry, before answering anyway, "The answer, unfortunately, to all questions is; the Dursley's. I was cleaning up

and doing housework almost as soon as I could walk, and definitely before I could actually remember anything significant. They're actually a few of the primary people I want to prank the living nightmares out of. And what you were planning was kind of obvious from the start really."

Fred and George exchanged a look and nodded. George dropped the soot in amongst other bags of various substances that Harry accurately deduced were ingredients for various experiments and future pranks. Then they drug Harry over to a corner that he hadn't spent any further amount of time in than was strictly necessary to dust the shelves, clean the carpets, fluff the pillows, and organize the books. Then they sat him down on a couch before sitting in the high wing-back chairs directly across from him.

"All right then mate," said Fred.

"Here's the deal," added George.

"The secret to the art of pranking," said Fred.

"Is not just various gags and tricks and toys and all that," said George.

"Although that certainly helps," acknowledged Fred.

"It is all about attitude," continued George.

"The right attitude is key," agreed Fred.

"Without the right attitude, or any attitude at all, you always fail," said George.

"Like you did," inserted Fred.

"Like you did," agreed George. "However, it can't be just any attitude. It has to be the right attitude. Am I right Fred?"

"Too right, my most eloquent twin," nodded Fred. "A bad attitude just makes you a bully. A bully of the worst sort, might I add, one that continuously and non-stop torments their opponents."

"I think we're all aware of a few bullies that have a bad attitude, but walk the narrow line of the prankster, am I right?" George pointed out.

Harry frowned thoughtfully. Two or three immediately came to mind, but unfortunately he knew he could come up with more if given time to think about it. Seeing that their apprentice was indeed considering their first lesson to him, they moved on.

"Having a serious attitude is actually worse than having a bad attitude," continued Fred. "No offense to the great Padfoot of the Marauders, but how he came to be framed and captured as he did was a prime example of having a serious attitude when pranking."

"In short," added George, "it makes you sloppy because you're doing it for personal reasons and you either care too much or don't care enough about the consequences of your pranks. Plus people think you're a stick in the mud and think what you're doing is just as serious as your attitude is. Dooming you to failure, even for the little stuff you want to try."

"In general Harry," concluded Fred, "you have one of the most serious attitudes we've ever encountered, and except for the rare points at which you were genuinely happy, we never wanted to risk pushing you over some edge, which is part of why we never targeted you while at school."

"Course we couldn't just leave you alone either," argued George.

Harry held up his hand to forestall any uncomfortable apologies or anything like that. "What's done is done, and quite frankly I never minded it much at all. Now, what is the right attitude to have? Other than mischievous that is."

"Hit it in one, our most brilliant apprentice," they both said together.

"You've started to get some of it, the part where you just plain don't care about the rules," said Fred.

"Except of course in how best to break them," commented George with a sly look.

"But the most important part," said Fred.

"Which you seem to have misplaced," said George.

"Is to just have fun!" they both shouted with glee. Harry couldn't help jumping at the sudden shout.

"If others don't see you having fun with it, they'll think you're doing something mean or worse something serious, and from there it's only a matter of time before being caught and suffering the consequences. And if you're not even having fun with it in the first place, why are you bothering doing it at all?" They each took turns saying every two or three words of this argument, Harry didn't bother paying attention to which said which. Besides, they were right.

Beyond fulfilling his father's legacy, why was he even interested in pranking people? Of filling in shoes for the Weasley Twins? Of being the next Prankster of Hogwarts?

Why? Because it was fun, and if it wasn't fun, it wasn't worth doing!

Harry's smile lit up his whole face and everything about what he had been doing and what he was doing here changed in that instant, filling the whole room with a feeling of mischievous glee. Fred and George's grins soon matched Harry's and it wasn't long before all three were laughing out loud. Not at anything in particular, just because they could and for no other reason than that.

"Now we can get started!" the twins announced.

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Harry's first prank was a true masterpiece, a thing of real beauty. Literally.

"Hahaha!" he laughed, being chased throughout the school by every witch, and a small number of wizards, in the place. Meanwhile every other wizard save for Harry were watching the chase with a distracted eye. The rest of their focus was on what it was that Harry had done exactly, which was why he had every witch in the castle chasing him for revenge. They also made sure not to touch it either.

Somehow, and no one was going to guess how, but Harry had gotten every single article of nightclothes, underwear, and sleepwear in the castle and strung it all up on wires and string and hung them all over the castle, both inside and outside, as streamers in hallways and between towers, and even as drying lines along the bridges, walls, and as obscene curtains covering all the paintings everywhere! Even in the Headmaster's Office! Of course he left their school uniforms and robes and any casual daywear alone so they all at least had something to wear during the ensuing chase. The most impressive thing? He'd done it to both boys and girls and some of the strung up clothing included what they had been wearing to bed and around their dorm rooms this morning, which meant he had access to every dorm room in the castle.

Instead of being frightened or concerned about this startling fact, Hermione Granger, the witch leading the pack, had made to slap Harry upside the head and force him to return her belongings at once before calling an end to it. Except Harry had dodged, stuck his tongue out at her and waited for her to try again before taking off like a rocket. Despite knowing better, she gave chase, shouting at him to stop and accept his punishment like a man. He just laughed and said loudly, so practically the whole school heard, that if she could catch him, he would personally escort her to where he put each piece of her clothing and help her pack it away, as well as disable the exploding jinx he'd put on each article of clothing. Whether it blew up the underwear or the person touching it, he left intentionally vague.

It was the main reason why none of the guys, not quite as bothered at having no underwear on under their robes, hadn't tried to feel up the girls clothing yet. Besides, the chase was much more entertaining as, after a certain point, the girls stopped paying attention when sudden gusts of wind blew past them and had an expected result on what they currently wore. Or much rather what they didn't wear that day.

Oddly enough, or rather not so oddly if one thought about it for a bit, the only witch not participating in the chase was one Luna Selene Lovegood.

Instead she was sitting, quite contentedly, sorting through her trunk which was filled with all of her belongings of the past four years at Hogwarts, even things that had been returned to her at the end of

the previous years and she had left at home this year. There was also one additional thing that had never been hers before now. A note, signed "Your Friend, Harry J. Potter" and some other nice things he said, but that was the most important part as far as Luna was concerned. There was also a note that all of Luna's belongings had likewise been jinxed to explode, but only if someone other than Luna or Harry himself touched them, and if they did it would definitely be the person exploding rather than the clothing, or other items.

Harry finally allowed the prank to end right around lunch time, partly because it was lunch time, but also because he was starting to get tired. Of course he'd been relying on Secret Passages and shortcuts all over the place to avoid or outwit the mob, giving him brief respites while they went around the long way, or searched all over until they finally caught sight of him once more. He'd actually intended to let Hermione win, but at some point Ginny had pulled ahead and she was the first to tackle him as he 'paused' in front of the Great Hall doors.

"Oomph!" he cried as they both fell to the floor. Unfortunately he had been just a bit too close to the doors, and they flew open when he fell back, letting everyone inside witness the colossal crash of every witch at Hogwarts falling on top of a prone Ginny Weasley and Harry Potter. Except that Harry Potter was currently standing on a ladder going up to the center of the enchanted ceiling, hanging the last of the underwear and bedclothes over every last square inch of space in the giant room.

"Oh, hey Dennis! You all right there?" Harry called down, grinning like a loon as he slid all the way down the ladder like a fireman.

Surprised, more at what they were witnessing, than what the real Harry Potter had just revealed to them, the mob slowly got to their feet and stared, their jaws hanging loose at the sheer scope of what they were seeing. When Ginny and Hermione (she'd been right behind the younger witch) finally got up, they revealed a nearly crushed Dennis Creevey, wearing poor-fitting spare of Harry's Hogwarts uniform. Moments later, Colin, who now looked like Harry Potter as well, came running out of a side corridor and stopped in a slide beside his brother.

"Aw, sorry Dennis," the 'new' Harry whined in a way that was identical to Colin Creevey, "Was waiting for the Polyjuice to finish taking effect. Sorry Harry."

"Nah, that's OK Colin," the insanely grinning Harry assured him, "I'm done anyway. Oh, and you might want to step clear Dennis. You don't count as 'Harry Potter' anymore unfortunately. And I don't think you want to be the one responsible for demolishing Hogwarts after a thousand years of noble service."

Everyone froze. Harry laughed.

"Kidding! I'm kidding! There's not nearly enough power in these undies to so much as scorch the walls. But I'm pretty sure that whoever does touch these lovelies first, aside from myself that is, and one other, will most likely be murdered most foul by every witch, and a number of wizards here."

"Harry... why have you done this?" asked Hermione, trying to understand what had sent her friend off the deep end.

Harry smiled at her and asked in return, "I'm curious about girls, so I went to my godfather for advice. He said the he and my father and their friends did this sort of thing all the time and the girls never minded before. He also assured me that I would learn everything I needed to know about a woman by showing her underwear to the entire school. Was he right, Hermione? I'm just curious..." If it weren't for the fact that a fifteen year old boy were the one saying this, the entire female population of the school would have sighed and cooed at the precocious act. As it was, they just lost most of their ire.

"POTTER!"

Well, most of them did.

"You! You! YOU!" Umbridge shouted, shoving herself to the front, huffing and puffing and red in the face. "YOU!" She was so flustered that she couldn't even think of anything to scream at him.

"Hello Headmistress," Harry continued to smile and reached down to pick up something at his feet. "I'm sorry, as I was just explaining to Hermione, I was only curious, and I'm afraid I might have gotten a

bit carried away. I do apologize. Here, I believe this is what you're looking for?" He held up some very large, kitten-covered bloomers.

"POTTER! YOU! ARE GOING TO PAY FOR THIS!" she screamed, ignoring how everyone behind her tried to stop her, reaching to hold her back or calling for her to stop. She ignored them and stomped towards the thorn in her side, intending to make him suffer detentions for the rest of the year until his whole body was covered in scars! She grabbed back her bloomers, intending on screaming some more, but was distracted when they began to glow, "POTTER I'm going to—!" The bloomers blew up in her hand and started a chain reaction that began in the pile at her feet and went to every scrap of space in the Great Hall and then out the window to the rest of the castle.

It was a magnificent sight, not that anyone felt so at the time. Every strand of clothing was hung in a precise and carefully decided method, so that when one strand finished exploding in bright colors and lights, the next strand was in the perfect position to pick up the next link in the chain detonation, until the entire castle was lit up with colorful and bright explosions. Of course it wasn't until the evening edition of the Daily Prophet and the special edition of the Quibbler that anyone realized the patterns weren't there just to look pretty. No, you had to be a good distance away to see it clearly, but most could see it quite well from as close as Hogsmeade. In bright flashing explosions, letters spelled out; "UMBRIDGE DID IT" In neon pink of course.

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"So, what did you think of my first prank?" Harry asked his masters as they sat in the workroom in the two wing-back chairs and the couch. He of course got the couch.

"Hm, not bad, not bad at all," acknowledged George, who was reading the Daily Prophet and glancing repeatedly at the photo of the exploding panties.

"Love the cover story," agreed Fred, who was avidly reading through the Quibbler article. He had the magazine turned to the side and was staring at the foldout picture that was at the center of it the

pages. Harry could read the front cover of the Quibbler, showing an exuberant Luna hugging a stuffed animal and waving as a man he presumed to be her father hugged his own stuffed animal and was waving just as excitedly. At the bottom of the front cover was the title of the main article; "Harry Potter Uncovers Underwear Smuggling Ring At Heart Of Hogwarts!"

The funny thing? That was the same title the Daily Prophet was using for the same story.

"So, our young apprentice," George began.

"There's no way I can get you two to stop calling me that, is there?" he interrupted.

"Nope," confirmed Fred, still staring at the centerfold... er, center of the folding pages of the Quibbler Special Edition.

"Now that you've succeeded in your first prank, it's time for your next lesson," said George.

"Just to be clear," interceded Fred, "how many lessons have we imparted to you so far?"

"Just to be clear," confirmed George. "We need to know what number we're on and all."

"You guys have numbered lessons on teaching someone how to prank?" asked Harry, incredulous.

"No!" They both denied. "Of course not!"

"That would imply numbers."

"And rules."

"And order."

"And a method to our madness."

"Control to our chaos."

"You should know by now, Harry," they both said together, "we don't work that way."

"So far," he said, ignoring their teasing of him, "we've covered attitude. And methods of sneaking around the castle. And the fireworks spells you two use on your Wheezes, which I'm sure you'll recognize the base design there in the photos. I was promised a lesson on the wonders of dung, poo, and everything ew for the next time. But given how late it is, I'll wait until tom—er, today again. Still, it would be nice to know my grading for my first prank."

"Ah, well, you see, this here," George patted the folded up Daily Prophet, "while very grand and flawlessly executed..."

"Aye, flawlessly executed," agreed Fred, patting the Quibbler against his chest in a very different manner from his twin.

"... Was complete amateur hour," finished George.

"Complete amateur hour." George whacked Fred on the head with the newspaper.

"Amateur hour!" exclaimed Harry, standing up in a fury.

"Now hold on, hold on," assuaged George. "As I said, it was flawlessly executed, and let me share something with you, when you came to us this afternoon, asking to be our apprentice, we honestly thought it would take over a hundred tries for you to actually pull off your first prank, to say nothing of getting away with it Scott free."

Hearing that, Harry blushed, turned his head and sat back down. The twins grinned and Fred asked, "How many times?"

"..." Harry grumbled for a moment, but rather than have them needle him for the rest of the night, he said more clearly, "157 times. First time I've ever gotten the fireworks to go off in the right order..."

"Yeah, that is always the trickiest," agreed George.

"Now see here, our young apprentice," said Fred, "The key to the perfect prank is—"

"Attitude, I know, I've been working on it!" promised Harry.

"Well, yes, attitude is the most basic of the basics," Fred continued, "But the real key isn't the scale at which it's performed, although I must admit this is up there with our departure, my fabulous twin."

"I must agree, my infamous brother," George nodded his head, having gotten a hold of the Quibbler and was busy staring at the center... pages at whatever had held his brother so captivated.

"So what is the key to the perfect prank?" asked Harry.

"Well, there are three actually," said Fred, trying to blindly retrieve the Quibbler without ripping it. "Timing, Target, and Trouble."

"OK, the first two I can puzzle out, but trouble?"

"The immediate fallout of a successful prank," explained George, turned fully away from his twin and Harry now, avoiding Fred's blindly searching arm. "The more trouble you, or your dupe, gets into, the more successful it was. Umbridge is still at Hogwarts, still Headmistress, and all her Decrees are still in place, and if you look at the Prophet, you'll notice one more."

Harry snorted, having already read it and knew what he was referring to. An Educational Decree that changed Hogwarts school uniform to exclude undergarments of any kind, mostly because there weren't any anymore on campus. But he saw their point.

"Umbridge was your dupe, everyone believes you and blames her," continued George, "but she's not in any real trouble. Hence, amateur hour."

"We got expelled ten times before our Third Year," Fred went on to say. "Ten successful, perfect pranks, well, other than we got caught of course. Professor Dumbledore always somehow managed to turn it around so we stayed in school though. I think he liked how we kept things exciting for him."

"Yeah, we really kept things hopping during our Second Year," George laughed, as did Fred after a moment of thought.

"The point is, you need to keep those three key things in mind whenever designing a prank. Don't have perfect timing, it'll just be a

messy accident nobody's going to laugh at and you'll have to clean up. If your target isn't either a right arse everyone hates, or loves to laugh at, or even just has a great sense of humor, well then you're back to bullying. We always made sure to pick our targets carefully in that regard."

"Usually by making our targets the actual bullies of the school," said George.

"True, my fellow master to our apprentice," said Fred. "But the way to tell an amateur prank from a master prank is by how much trouble gets raised because of your prank. So, you said you wanted a grade, is that still true, our young apprentice?"

Harry frowned, deep in thought, but he heard enough to nod his head. He wasn't about to say anything though.

"Hm, what do you think my fellow teacher of our pupil?" Fred conferred with George.

"Hm, let us use a grading scale he is more familiar with, my fellow professor of our mutual student, something our young apprentice will be able to work with. Yes?" George suggested.

"I agree, my teaching twin," nodded Fred.

"Therefore," announced George.

"We grant you, in the ignoble Art of Pranking, the grade of A!" the both pronounced together.

"A? Acceptible?" confirmed Harry.

"A, for Amateur," they both said with evil grins.

Harry grumbled, but there wasn't much he could say to argue against it. They were right, the trouble after the end of his prank showed it was amateur hour the whole way. Even if it took him over a hundred and fifty times to get it perfect.

"Give me a hint here," he finally asked, "What grade should I be shooting for? Does O still mean Outstanding?"

"You don't want an O," George shook his head. "O is for Orderly. Like our Perfect Prefect Ponce of a brother, Percy. Actually, that's what you really don't want, a triple P (PPP)!"

"But you don't have to worry about that, our amateurish apprentice," said Fred, "You're already way above that. Just don't go backwards and get a serious attitude, and you'll be fine."

"Also, our lessons on all things ew take quite a while, so you'll probably want to get here quite early. Wake us up instead of our alarm clocks and I guarantee you won't have any trouble convincing us to take you on as our amateur apprentice once more," advised George. "It may even take you a few days, depending on what your personal tolerance is for the nasty and disgusting."

"Guys, I've gutted a decaying basilisk and witnessed dark rituals, and had sex. With Slytherins. Unless you guys do stuff that I would rather kill you for telling me about with that sort of thing, I shouldn't have a problem. You two, on the other hand, might."

"Hm, I'm beginning to regret teaching our apprentice how to be a better prankster, my twin comrade," confided George.

"As am I, my nakama tsuin," muttered Fred in return.

"Why do you guys think I wait so long before threatening you?" Harry grinned.

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Harry's next prank was much more innovative, he thought anyway. Although he couldn't help the nagging feeling that somehow, somewhere, someone had already pulled it off. So, rather than limiting himself just to the Great Hall, Harry enacted this against the entire school, without exception. Not even himself.

Although, since he'd spent pretty close to a solid year (it was nearly three hundred straight resets so, close to a year) going around naked just because you don't feel like wearing clothes does kind of take the stress out of reprisals. Plus, given the way he was before

the resets, he knew that no one would ever suspect him so long as he was caught up in it too.

It took a lot more preparation than normal, even a couple trial runs on random individuals once he'd gotten the prank itself ready. He also had to undergo lessons "Wonders of Dung, Poo and Everything Ew!", "Mess, Mess, What Mess?", and "Magic Triggers and How To Use Them" along with a lot of other interesting tidbits. Currently he was in the middle of the Twins "M., Bear and Ass" lesson, which was having him learn the fun, funny, and not fun or funny ways of embarrassing other people as part of the prank. It was a lot harder than he expected.

The whole thing was completed by nine o'clock. He'd prepared enough and gone over it enough times that he was sure it would work the first time. What would make things so interesting is how people reacted, because, and other than those single person experiments with it, as well as any time he had a new part to add to it, this would be the very first time he'd pulled this prank at full scale. He was at Diagon Alley by half past nine and had the Twins convinced before ten. He explained his prank and their curriculum so far and they would give him the benefit of the doubt and grade him by the end of business.

Crossing his fingers, Harry counted down the seconds to noon, the time at which his prank would be activated, right in the middle of Lunch too.

Harry, Hermione and Ron walked into the Great Hall together, all of them fully clothed as they walked through the doorway, as was everyone else in the school going to lunch at that time. The school clock struck twelve and sudden conversations started to spring up all over the place.

"Ron," Hermione asked and pointed, "Is that Justin in his underpants?"

"What?" Ron turned to look and then his eyes suddenly bulged out of his sockets. "Bloody hell! Hannah Abbott is in her underwear!"

"No she's not," Hermione contradicted him, "She's fully dressed."

"Uh, no she isn't," Ron insisted, and then looked at the original topic of conversation, "But Justin is."

"Hm," Harry just smirked and enjoyed the meal, and the view.

Then his eyes rested upon a very familiar sight. "Go Luna," he muttered, drinking in the flesh on display for him alone.

"Why's she got those fuzzy bits over her knockers like that?" Ron asked, sounding confused. Looking around some more, he said with relief, observing, "At least Ginny is dressed."

Harry grinned, enjoying his other girlfriend's current attire, and decided to break his best friend's illusions, "Not to me she isn't."

"Ahh!" Hermione suddenly screeched, then again when she looked from Ron to Harry and back again. "You've got no clothes on! You had clothes on a minute ago! I know you did! What happened to your clothes?"

"Heh, nor have you," Ron said, smiling dopily, staring up and down Hermione's black-lace clad figure.

"Ron!" Hermione instinctively covered her arms over herself, despite the fact that she really was wearing her clothing. She then cuffed Ron one on the shoulder and ordered, "Prat! Eyes front! Now! You too, Harry!"

Harry shrugged and went back to his meal, still privately enjoying his lunch time entertainment.

'Welcome to Potter's Hot or Not!' he mentally crowed, doing a quiet tally of all the witches in the castle the were hot enough for a shag, just snogging, or were total cows. Surprisingly, in spite of the muggle stereotypical reputation of witches being ugly, there were very few that were ugly by any measure. Even those that Harry would normally think so, such as Millicent Bulstrode, had surprisingly attractive features under their robes.

And then Umbridge strode in, fresh from putting Snape in prison, who come to think of it might have been an excellent scapegoat for this, but Harry had bigger fish to fry in mind.

"What is the meaning of this?" she shouted into the bedlam of girls and boys staring at each other and accusing the other of not wearing anything more than their underwear.

"Pansy, for gods sake, put some clothes on!" Draco ordered, walking in with most of the Inquisitorial Squad coming in behind him. To everyone's eyes, both boys and girls, Umbridge and every member of the Inquisitorial Squad were fully clothed. To their eyes however...

"Uh... Professor Umbridge, why are all the girls in their knickers?" Draco asked her... from across the room. Ergo he shouted it in order to be heard.

"A very good question Draco!" Umbridge shouted back, standing before the head table. "I would ask the same of all my students. Why is it that everyone here, other than my Inquisitorial Squad, are here in their underwear, do you think, hm?"

The wheels started turning, grinding for some, but turning nevertheless. The rest of the Professors, and even the OWL/NEWT Proctors, came into the Great Hall for Lunch at that time. Harry, and most of the guys in the room... make that all of the guys in the room, made sure to look anywhere but at Madam Marchbanks. A lot of guys were suddenly very interested in their girlfriends, or the ceiling. For Harry, he just tapped the edge of his glasses with one finger and suddenly Madam Marchbank's entire body was 'fuzzed out' just for him.

"Hem hem!" Umbridge croaked at the sight.

"I say, what in the world is going on here?" Professor Flitwick exclaimed the moment he and the others stepped through the doorway to the Great Hall.

"The girls are all in their knickers, Professor, sir!" a First Year Ravenclaw told him.

"No we're not!" a Second Year girl beside him exclaimed, "The boys are though! Um, even you Professor," she added with a blush.

Flitwick quickly took control of the situation. Walking up to the Head Table, and seeing for himself who was clothed and who was not, he

quickly deduced what was going on. "Quiet! Quiet please!" he called for order, while Umbridge was still having an apoplexy next to him. "Now, who here to everyone, both male and female, is still dressed?"

Whispered conversations, and then almost all the pointing went to Umbridge and her Inquisitorial Squad.

"Madam Umbridge, would you care to explain?" Professor Flitwick said with a rather dry tone, holding his wand between his hands.

At that moment, the owl post arrived, which was odd seeing as the owl post normally only came during the morning, around breakfast time. Most of them were delivering emergency printed copies of the Daily Prophet, however, as well as the Quibbler Special Edition regarding Hogwarts Underwear smuggling ring. And the crowning glory, that which made Harry positive would get him an A with the twins, A for Anarchist, just as the clock struck twelve minutes past twelve o'clock noon, every 'unclothed' person's remaining dignity against the opposite sex vanished right before everyone's eyes. Everyone, that is, except for the 'still clothed' people of Umbridge and her Inquisitorial Squad.

Screeches of indignation and outrage came from the girls, shouts of surprise and confusion from all the men. Thankfully, Harry wasn't stupid or willing enough to go too far in this prank as to humiliate every girl in Hogwarts, even temporarily. Therefore the 'fuzzy bits', very similar to certain censorship aspects in certain movies from certain countries, covered all the intimate areas of the opposite sex. For girls that included around their chests as much as their waists.

Harry did his best to hide his smirk, recalling what the Twins had shared with him. The House Elves were the key to just about everything in Hogwarts. Get them on your side and you can pull off pretty much any prank imaginable and more. Unfortunately, Harry had only one favor to trade for the House Elves' aide, but thankfully he was stuck in a time loop and for the time being one favor was enough. This was definitely worth getting every last scrap of Hermione's hats and booties and everything else she'd been making as part of S.P.E.W. and burning it all in the kitchen fires before the eyes of all the Elves and promising them that he would personally stop Hermione from making any more 'evil bad clothes' and from

leaving them laying around under messes for as long as he was able.

After doing all that, Dobby was actually the least affectionate of all the Elves towards him.

Finally, somebody took the time to read the front page article of the Daily Prophet, which was all about a brand new Ministry Educational Decree. Harry had just made up some random numbers that were over three hundred, but less than five hundred. The Decree stated, in layman terms, that a special charm had been put in place over everyone in Hogwarts that "allowed the High Inquisitor and her chosen designators" to visually inspect any and all concealed weapons, charms, marks, etc. There may also have been an addendum that word for word mirrored the Educational Decree Umbridge had put forth the afternoon she get's outed as a panty smuggler.

To top it off, Harry also gave detailed descriptions of the 'detentions' Umbridge handed out, only he left it up to the imagination of the reader where and what kind of blood brands appeared on the bodies of children who were forced to be naked in front of their teachers and members of the opposite sex, no matter what they wore. He swore, if this didn't get Umbridge fired, he'd go back to driving the woman bonkers like when she gets left at the hands of the Centaurs, or the Merpeople, or the Acromantulas.

"Um, Harry, can," Hermione stuttered, holding her arms protectively over the 'important bits' and staying sat at the table, "can you go and get your Invisibility Cloak? Please?"

Harry blinked and then tilted his head to the side, showing his curiosity and some surprise. "Hermione, drop your arms. Now, if you please."

"What?" she was outraged, "Why?"

"Because, apparently, when there is something... covering... you, the... I guess fuzzy stuff is the word we should use?" He was going to say Censorship spells, but at the last second he remembered what Ron had called it and decided that was safer. Hermione could be wicked smart, and he honestly had no clue about this particular aspect of the spell he had cast as part of the prank. "When you

cover yourself like that, the fuzzy stuff disappears, and right now, you really do look, uh, well..." he blushed and played the 'innocent boyhood friend' role to the hilt.

Hermione's eyes went wide and her arms snapped to her side like she had burned herself. The Censorship spells resumed the moment her 'bits' were 'uncovered' again. "Oh," she squeaked. "Thank you Harry, for that. Now, about that cloak?"

Harry merely nodded his head and pulled it out. Hermione ducked under the table and was soon on her way to the Library, he was sure, to research the 'charm' the 'Ministry' had put in place over Hogwarts, no doubt in hopes of finding a counter spell.

"WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?" Umbridge finally exploded.

Harry glanced over and saw that she had both copies of Daily Prophet and Quibbler in hand. He really had to hand it to Mister Lovegood and Rita Skeeter. Between those two, he had practically every publication that mattered. Well, everything except Teen Witch Weekly.

Hm, maybe not Potter's Hot or Not, but, Fudge's?

Next time, definitely next time.

In the end, however, while the twins gleefully granted him the grade of A on the Prankster Grading Scale, the fallout of his prank was not exactly what he'd been hoping for. Umbridge wasn't fired, but Fudge was. Every student, save those in the Inquisitorial Squad wrote letters home before Lunch was through with, and those at home, plus friends of family and all involved, had the Wizengamut convene that very afternoon, before the Fifth Years were even halfway finished with their OWLs, (which they all still had to sit for despite being naked to the eyes of the opposite sex), and kicked Fudge and most of his Administration out of Office. Umbridge would not last the year, and would not become the next Headmaster of Hogwarts, but she was not kicked out that very day kicking and screaming. All of the Ministry Educational Decrees would be reversed before the end of the school year, but again, not that day.

On a more personal front, Harry found himself getting as many requests for a date or to be his girlfriend as those days when he

forgot to put clothes on, but thankfully nobody got into the mob mentality again, probably due to the girls all realizing they were just as naked to his eyes as he was to theirs. Hermione sequestered herself, except when sitting for the History OWL, in the Library and struggled with herself to find a counter spell for the 'Ministry charm', and found it all but impossible. Mostly because it was a spell that the Twins had discovered in one or more leftovers from the days of the Marauders.

When they showed it to him, he laughed himself to the floor and couldn't get up for ten minutes when it was revealed that Mooney and Wormtail had been the developers and would-be instigators of such a prank seeing how they had discovered the way of actually making it work. Thankfully, for Harry's reputation with the twins, and as a shadow prankster, they never had pulled it off, leaving him open to use it himself. The Censorship spells had not been part of the original prank design.

That night, Harry went to bed at a normal hour for once, and got a full nights sleep. Starting the very next reset, he began making plans to destroy Umbridge, once and for all.

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Madam Jane Umbridge, interim Headmistress of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, woke up with a feeling of satisfaction and determination, tempered only by the unhealthy dose of paranoia she employed in order to maintain her position at the Ministry and now at Hogwarts. Last night, she had taken care of two thorns in her side with one swift and decisive move.

That blumbering half-breed oaf, Hagrid, an eyesore if ever there was one, and a stain on Hogwarts more recently tarnished reputation, and that annoying witch Minerva McGonagall. Honestly, the only target had been Hagrid himself, and she was quite pleased with the results from last night's raid. Not that she could, yet, afford to openly show her pleasure at such misfortune. The other professors were barely tolerable as it was, if they thought she would start going after them next they might very well revolt against her, or even go on strike. She could not allow that. Not yet, at any rate. Once the last

NEWT was finished and sent off to the Ministry for grading, well, that was another matter.

And then there was the largest spur in her heel, one that she would be glad to be rid of, one way or another. She looked forward to the day she could finally put Harry Potter in his place, a spot in Azkaban, right next to that mongrel godfather of his, as soon as the Aurors got off their lazy bums and caught the bastard.

She made her way to breakfast, after making herself presentable, leisurely taking her time. Still flush from the victory of the night before, in spite of her paranoid thoughts that were a matter of course these days, she didn't even notice her door opening and closing by itself after she had already left her room.

Harry breathed a sigh of relief as he raced down the opposite hall under his Invisibility cloak. He didn't want to miss this.

In the Great Hall, Harry was softly humming a little tune to himself, he really couldn't help himself, given how much effort he'd already put into this prank alone. That song was addictive, darn it!

He sat down to have breakfast, like he did every morning, with Ron and Hermione, making sure to invite Neville, Ginny, and a few others he'd been getting to know 'recently' to sit with them. The Creevey brothers weren't actually so bad. Not to mention, Colin knew a wicked lot about cameras, enough that if Harry ever became capable of bringing physical items with him from reset to reset, or ever escaped the resets and decided to go on a One Man Prank War, he would have enough blackmail material that he could be running everything before graduating his Sixth Year. Dennis knew just as much about design and crafts. That was how Harry had been able to actually pull off distributing fake Daily Prophets. Well, that, and a seriously overpowered duplication charm.

Pavarti and Lavender were interesting young women, and while he and Hermione and even Ron had absolutely nothing in common with either of them, save that they were all sorted into Gryffindor, he often enjoyed talking with them. Harry would have invited quite a few more people to dine with him, especially this morning, but people always looked at him funny when he invited people of other Houses to sit at his table, Or even when he sat with them and brought Hermione and Ron along for the ride. And while most often he

wouldn't care about that sort of thing, today, or rather this today, he needed to make sure that nothing would rock the boat. Not until it was too late that is.

Umbridge walked into the Great Hall and sat herself down in Dumbledore's throne-like chair at the Head Table, alone. Her meal was delivered with the usual promptness of the House Elves, though she did note that the pastry was a bit too blue for her tastes, as such she left it alone.

Watching from Gryffindor table, Harry almost could not believe his eyes. She couldn't be making it this easy for him, could she?

For the first time that morning, after finishing the first course of her breakfast, minus that horrid blue thing, she looked up and closely examined all of her subjects... er, students.

Harry could not help the grin that formed when he saw Umbridge look up finally. He watched as her eyes went wide, pupils dilating and her complexion going to a mix of mottled red and puce white.

"WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?" she suddenly stood up and screamed.

The entire Great Hall went dead silent at once, everyone staring at the enraged toad-witch. For the longest time, they just stared at one another; Umbridge, and every single person at Hogwarts, even most of the ghosts.

"Is there something wrong, Headmistress?" one of the Seventh Years on the Inquisitorial Squad asked.

"What?" Umbridge looked at him, dumbfounded, and when he repeated his question, she screeched, "What? I don't understand what you are saying, you, you, you blue cretin! Why are you singing for that matter, and what does la la la even mean?"

Harry had to bite his lips and hold his breath to keep from exploding with laughter. Oh, if only they all knew what she was seeing.

"Where did all of these blue people come from for that matter?"

People began to whisper among themselves, talking about how their new Headmistress seemed to be losing her mind. Umbridge, however, did not hear the hissing of whispers turning into a dull roar of conversation. No, as demonstrated by her covering her ears and glaring at the crowd before her, and her accompanying shout, she was hearing something very different indeed. "WHY IS EVERYBODY SINGING? AND WHAT IS THE MEANING OF *LA LA, LA LALALALA LA*!"

Hermione's eyes widened in surprise and recognition, along with practically every muggleborn or muggle-raised person in the room. Then her eyes came to rest on Harry, who was still having trouble restraining his laughter, now holding both hands against his mouth, tears leaking from his eyes, and his whole face a bright, burning red. His body jerking every few seconds was another big clue.

"Harry!" she hissed, dragging him from his seat, "What did you do?"

"What? I... hahaha, um, I didn't *snort*, didn't do anything, I swear!" he struggled to speak without laughing, not entirely succeeding.

"Hermione, why do you think Harry has anything to do with Umbridge losing it?" Ron asked, once they were out in the hallway.

"Oh honestly," she said, exasperated. "And Harry, really? The Smurfs® of all things?"

"Name one other song that is as annoying as that," he challenged her, gaining better control over his laughter. "Or sticks in your head longer?"

She had to give him that, she acknowledged with a shrug and a grimace. "Very well, but why today, of all days? And... how, for that matter?"

"Ask Madam Pince for the how. Really interesting book she knows how to find that has all sorts of interesting illusions to cast. As for why... you were there on the Astronomy Tower with me Hermione, you know what she did. Now, if you don't mind, I'm going to go back, finish my breakfast, and enjoy the show." Harry smiled and gleefully walked back into the Great Hall.

The show was every bit as good as Harry thought it would be and more. Every time anyone said anything to Umbridge at all, whether at a whisper, a question, or a shout, all she heard was the Smurf Song at the strongest volume her mind could imagine. Everywhere she looked, all the wizards were your standard giant-sized (as in human sized) Smurfs, and all the witches were variations of Smurfette. The blueberry danish that she didn't eat with her breakfast was actually the potion counter agent to the illusion spell Harry had cast on her that morning before she came to breakfast. If she had eaten it, it wouldn't be until the middle of lunch that the illusion would have finally kicked in.

It only got better when the Test Proctors came down, and as was typical of what they did every day, they attempted to have several very important conversations with Umbridge regarding the test taking. Of course she couldn't recognize them, nor understand a word that they said, but rather than doing her best to inform them of that fact and using logic to figure out what was happening to her, she overreacted and responded with her usual hate and disdain.

They had the Minister, with several members of the upper echelon of the Ministry at the school before morning classes even began. Harry gleefully tagged the Minister with a certain charmed pin as the man entered the school. He didn't even have to do it himself, as Dennis Creevey was more than happy to run down the Minister and put the pin on him in the following tussle. Being that he was a tiny Third Year, the Aurors that came with the Minister let him go and passed the incident off without a second glance.

The moment Umbridge's eyes landed on the Minister, however, she turned a truly frightening shade of purple and screamed out, "YOU!" pointing at the Minister, "You're the one behind this, aren't you? You're the Leader of all these-these-these THINGS! Well, I won't stand for this, you hear me? I won't stand for this at all! I am the High Inquisitor of this school, and I want you and all your... things out of here at once!" And then she drew her wand.

The Twins, later that evening, went right past giving him the Anarchist grade, and went straight to T, for Troublemaker, the highest grade they knew to give, as it was the grade they gave themselves, being Twin Troublemakers, of course they actually got a TT.

Having had quite a blast learning how to and pulling off some pretty amazing pranks, Harry decided to cool it for a while. He wasn't quite sure what could top getting Snape thrown out of the Wizarding World and having his legal name changed to Gargamel, getting Umbridge not only fired, but thrown in Azkaban for assaulting the Minister, getting the Minister thrown out of office that very afternoon because he hired Umbridge in the first place, and to top it all off he got to see Dumbledore's face when the man came back to Hogwarts that evening to discover Harry sitting in his chair, all the tables and benches in the Great Hall replaced with pillows, and every student in either a bikini, loincloth, or less (Luna didn't see the need to bother with more than the scarves) and every single last one of them, Malfoy and his lot included, reenacting a scene straight from some Arabian or Roman sex novel, with Harry as the emperor, all the witches as his concubines, and all the guys as either slaves, manservants, or guards.

The only problem now though, he sighed as he ate another grape from Luna's lips, he'd become so focused on learning how to prank that he wasn't sure what else he could do to occupy his time with. Maybe he needed some more advice? He'd go back to his friends, see what they had to say. Although, he really hoped he could talk it around to something better than 'no consequences', because he was still dealing with the fallout from that. His present indulgence proof enough of that.

Maybe he could ask Ron. His best friend had managed to surprise him a couple times here and there, maybe he would have an actually good idea. It was worth a shot.

TBC...

AN: I had hoped to have a few more chapters ready by this point, but unfortunately, the next one is being rather stubborn, and as of today's posting date, I haven't gotten any further than three-quarters through the next chapter. Please keep the ideas rolling in, they really do help, and I appreciate response and how much you guys seem to like this story I'm writing here. Hopefully I can keep up the good work. Also, some statement, or observations made by Harry during this chapter may seem confusing. This is sort of a... overlay chapter, if you will. As is the next one... if I ever get it finished. Meaning that they cover events that happen between or during events of other chapters, just focusing in on one aspect or area of Harry's

experiences rather than everything he's facing in peripherally chronological order.

Anyway, Please Read & Review!

Chapter 11: Ron's Idea

"Hey guys," said Harry as a conversation starter, "If you were stuck in a time loop, what would you do?"

"What?" blurted out Ron, "What are talking about mate? What's a time loopy? Some kind of muggle sweet?"

Harry blinked and then he laughed. Once he had his laughter under control, he said, "No, Ron, nothing like that, but that was seriously funny there mate," he said, still laughing a bit. "But no," continued Harry, all trace of humor gone in a heartbeat, "I'm actually talking about a magical event. A magical event where time, say a single day, is stuck in a loop, constantly repeating itself. In other words, today is the same day as every day. Tomorrow will actually be today, just as yesterday was today, and only you are aware of it. Everybody else thinks it's just another regular day, but you are the only one that is aware of the time loop and that there is no tomorrow, it'll just be today all over again."

"That... makes no sense..." said Ron.

"Oh, I get it," said Hermione, "A moral dilemma game. What If? I always wanted to play one of those, but my parents patently refused, and I never had any friends that wanted to play it with me. What a wonderful idea Harry!" She hugged him and grinned. He didn't bother pretending they were 'just friend' hugs, not on his side of it anyway.

"So, what if you were stuck in the same day and couldn't get out of it? What if there were no tomorrow?" Harry repeated his challenge.

"Hm," Neville mulled it over before answering, "No tomorrow? That would mean there would be no consequences. There wouldn't any punishments! We could do whatever we want!"

Harry posed himself like the thinker and made, "Hmm," sounds for a bit, and then asked, "But would you? Really?"

"What do you mean, Harry?" asked Hermione.

"If there were suddenly no consequences to your actions, would you really lose all inhibitions and do whatever you wanted to do the

moment it occurred to you to do it? Just because you couldn't be punished for it tomorrow, would you really do whatever you want?" he asked the question of all of them, but directed it to Neville in particular.

He seemed to wilt under the attention and finally just shrugged and quietly admitted, "Probably, for a little while at least, but then I'd start to feel guilty and well... I probably would chicken out before I really did anything too outrageous."

"Ah, but you're not putting yourself into the proper mindset, of course," Hermione interceded. "With time looping, every single day would be the same. People would repeat their actions the same way, exactly the same way, every day. I would imagine it would get dreadfully dull after a short amount of time. With no variation, save for what you yourself do to change things. It would certainly drive me mad in no time at all, I'm sure."

Everyone at the table, save for Harry and Hermione, suddenly started laughing.

"What?" she said, unsure whether to be insulted, angry, sad, or annoyed.

Ron was the first to recover, though he was barely coherent between laughs as he replied, "Oh come on, Hermione! Hah hah! You? Go crazy from things being dull? From things being predictable and routine? From everything being the same, so you can know what to expect from everything?"

"From never being able to learn anything new?" she countered effortlessly, "From you making the same snide comments every ten minutes? From helping you and Harry study and never, ever actually learn anything after a day's hard work?"

"That's actually a good point," Harry agreed, deciding to try a different track. "If you're stuck in a time loop, everything is always exactly the same, even the food made. Or the moves people take in chess. Even the wind blows the same way through the castle. So, now that we've heard from Neville, I ask again, what would you do if you were stuck in a time loop?"

"Well, the other part of that is that you get as much time as you'd like to learn and do stuff, instead of having to cram it into a single year or whatever," Ron said. "Me? I'd learn to be the greatest Quidditch player in the world!"

Harry blinked and seemed surprised for a moment, before a familiar grin crossed his face. He had forgotten how much he used to love playing Quidditch. Maybe it was time to get back on the broom?

"OK, well, how would that work then?" Harry asked, both genuinely curious and wanting to know for his own future plans.

"Oh, that's easy. Just have to practice every day, and when you get good enough, there's a certain level of skill that you just never lose. At least that's what all the Professional Quidditch Players all agree on. And the best news is that if you're good enough, some teams recruit you straight out of school, like they did with Krum!"

"How would that happen? Again, being stuck in a time loop where you only have a single day before time resets," Harry reminded him.

Ron shrugged and shoveled another bite of food into his mouth before swallowing it with a quart of juice. Then he answered, "Well, depending on how good you are, recruiters may show up the afternoon you're practicing. And if you're really good, they bring the team they want you to join as sort of a signing bonus. It's never happened before, but I'd love to get good enough where several teams show up, all just wanting me to join them!"

Harry arched an eyebrow at that, then shrugged and started trying to figure out how to get his broom away from the Troll Umbridge had hired to guard it.

The first challenge Harry had, after leaving breakfast to go find his broom, was actually finding whatever dungeon Filch and Umbridge had stashed it in. Rumor was they had moved it after the Twins made their great escape, and put a troll on guard duty. All just for his broom.

His first method was just to go looking for it. Who knew Hogwarts had over fifty dungeons, spread out over the entire foundation of Hogwarts, and was actually three levels deep? Not counting the Chamber of Secrets!

He actually spent the entire morning walking from dungeon to dungeon, looking for a troll guarding a broom. Not surprisingly, he kept getting turned around and kept winding up at the entrance to the Slytherin Common Room. After running into the Sexy Sexy Witches for the fourth time in a row, Harry gave up on just stumbling across his broom and moved on to his next plan, and went to get the Marauder's Map. Sadly, as he discovered with much regret, the Map only displayed humans, and pretty much ignored everything that wasn't, even if it happened to be a magical something like a troll. Which made sense really, he grudgingly admitted. If the map really did display the location and name of everything that existed inside the boundaries of Hogwarts, the map wouldn't be a map but a giant poster of black ink dots and illegible names filling the entire piece of parchment from border to border.

Which left him with a number of limited options. He could resume going from dungeon to dungeon, which would probably take him a year per dungeon. He could go and threaten/torture Umbridge for the information. Wouldn't be the first time. Or...

Harry took a proverbial deep breath, letting it out immediately as a sigh filled with dread, and went with his final option. He went to ask Malfoy for help.

Well, he said ask, but he really meant trick.

"Hah! That's hilarious, Potter!" Malfoy screeched, well it was probably meant as laughter, but it was as bad as nails on a chalkboard to Harry, hence 'screeched'. "You," pointed his wand at Harry, "want me," pointed at himself, "to help you," back to pointing at Harry and twirled it a bit, "get your broom back? HAHAHA!"

"No, I said," Harry emphasized the word, "that I wanted to thank you for helping me get my broom back. Past tense, Malfoy, pay attention. I'm going to be at the Pitch if anyone needs me. Thanks for taking the risk of getting caught by Umbridge for me. But, I suppose you did kind of owe me, since it was because of you that I lost my broom in the first place. Well, thanks to you, I now have my broom back, and so I'll be the better man and forgive you for that, Malfoy. Thanks again!" he called as he walked off, waving behind him. The moment he was out of sight, he was under his Invisibility Cloak and was trailing a panicking Malfoy as he raced down the stairs and took

several very specific turns, only to end up outside of a locked door, that he casually cast Alohomora at and then there were some very unfortunate noises coming from inside the room, and a puddle of something that was not water coming under the door from the other side.

Harry marked the door in his memory and then very carefully making his way back so that he could ensure he would be able to find this place again, next time without a guide. He even went back and forth a few times, from the door to the Grand Staircase and back again several times, absently noting that the puddle got larger with every visit. After sitting for the OWL, he went back down, and thankfully only got lost once and still managed to get to his goal without too much trouble.

It wasn't until later that night that he heard how Malfoy was found, locked in a room with a troll, so terrified that he pissed himself so that the floor of the room was actually several inches deep by the time someone came to let him out. Harry felt it was OK to laugh along with Ron after hearing about that at dinner time, and while Hermione outwardly disapproved of their laughter, he couldn't help noticing a smile growing on her lips the longer they laughed.

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The next morning, after taking care of Snape, informing Luna and Ginny they were all dating, filled Hermione's room with fresh red roses and a letter detailing his feelings for her, and gathered all of Hermione's SPEW clothes and got the House Elves to love him forever by burning the lot of it in front of them and swearing to keep Hermione from making any more of them, and having breakfast with his friends, Harry went down into the labyrinth of Hogwarts' Dungeons and put on his Invisibility Cloak just outside the door to the troll before entering.

It was as bad as that troll that Quirrel had killed/knocked out in his First Year. Big, ugly, smelly, and mean as demonstrated when it roared and swung its club when the door opened at Harry's Alohomora. It stopped only after the door shut and locked itself back, seemingly without anyone entering at all. The troll growled at the door, confused for a bit, but soon forgot about the whole thing, sitting back down on the floor where it had been chained to. The

other end of that chain lead to the wall, where Harry's Firebolt was literally bolted to the wall with iron bands to which the chains were attached.

It was simplicity itself to sneak around the troll, a bit harder to make sure he didn't touch any of the chains or make any noticeable noise, and even easier to turn the iron bands to so much paper that tore silently thanks to a silencing charm put on it. As for the chains, well, while he still couldn't cast a wandless levitation charm, he could still apply it via his hands and maintain it for a few seconds before the charm started to fail and the chains began to lower, also silently. Thankfully, the troll never noticed the sudden slack in his chains and just continued to sit there, not doing much of anything, except occasionally picking it's nose.

Harry quickly hid the broom under the Invisibility Cloak with him and then went back to the door and tried the unlocking charm again. He also tried physically unlocking the door. It stung him and would not unlock no matter what spells he tried. That was not a part of the plan, Harry thought to himself. He reached out with his senses and soon detected the ward, that even now was sending its signal, alerting Umbridge that he, "Harry Potter" was here in the room. Then again, he thought, apparently it's part of Umbridge's plan. Now, what to do to turn it on her?

He then turned around and looked over at the troll, and smiled.

"You're puny and weak," he said from the doorway. The troll was instantly on its feet, growling, club in hand. "That's what she said. You are puny and weak."

"Grr... WHO SAID?" the troll asked/growled. Harry had to hold his breath from the halitosis, and then nearly choked when the breath he finally took wasn't clear enough.

"The... *cough*... toad witch. The one, from the Ministry," Harry gasped. "She said that you are puny and weak and it was time to get something... better, bigger, stronger, tougher, anything that wasn't puny and weak." Harry figured, given what little he knew about trolls, that calling it smelly and ugly wouldn't much matter, but trolls were all about the strength and the size, and he needed it pretty mad for his plan to work.

"Grr... NO ONE STRONGER THAN GURK!" the troll said/growled.

"Hey, don't blame me," Harry said, getting out of the way of the door as it opened, "SHE said that you were puny and weak!" He then dove through the open door just before it slammed shut. There were some unfortunate and disturbing sounds that came from behind it and as he left, he couldn't help noticing a growing puddle of something that was not water, or urine, coming under the door from the other side. Harry did not go back to check it again.

Instead he went straight to the Quidditch Pitch and began doing the drills Wood and Angelina had been hammering into him for years as the team's Seeker. Well, he did the drills after just taking a few minutes, or an hour, or more, taking the time to just enjoy being able to fly once more. Although, he reluctantly had to admit, after being every bird imaginable and being able to fly under his own power, it just didn't quite measure up. Probably why he spent as little time just enjoying it as he did before moving into doing all the Quidditch drills that he'd been missing out on for months (or longer) now.

At lunch time, Hermione and Ron came searching for him, Ginny and Luna both having been there since before he'd arrived with his broom in tow, and he had to explain how it was he had his broom back.

"Not really sure what happened," he answered honestly to Hermione's questions, "All I know is that I found my broom, Umbridge showed up, and she let me leave. She never said a thing to me about the broom or asked me why I had it. She just let me out of the room and I left, that was it." Luna giggled, and Harry resolved to ask her to help him find his tells some time, if only so he could start lying more successfully.

With Ron and Ginny there, they had enough to do some of the team drills and Ginny and Harry both enjoyed chasing the Snitch, which Harry caught of course. Harry practiced all of his Quidditch moves, Sloth Grip Roll, Wronski's Feint, and a few others that were more stuff he did and didn't bother giving names to. He then did laps around the stadium, and without the banners or people in the way, made a game of doing the laps through the stadium, dodging beams and rafters and all sorts of obstacles, all at top speed. He made pretty good time too, he figured, but that wasn't too hard with a broom like the Firebolt.

Hermione insisted that he sit for the OWL test, and wouldn't leave him alone until he finally got off his broom. He finally figured it would just be best to go ahead and finish first and then he could come back out here in peace. He wasn't even off his broom for more than half an hour, and ten of those minutes were spent walking to and from the Castle.

By nightfall, he couldn't see anything unless it was only a few feet from him, and he was getting pretty tired, which still baffled him. How does one get exhausted sitting and hanging onto a magic broom as it flies through the sky?

Seeing that he could no longer practice, not realistically anyway, Harry flew back up to the Castle, went to dinner and after a night in with Luna and Ginny (BEST! GIRLFRIENDS! EVER!) of just sitting around talking, and the two of them giving serious critique as to his flying style and Quidditch skills, and maybe brainstorming ways of breaking Hermione down faster so she might be able to join them (for the Talking-Only dates) more regularly. They went to bed (clothing optional) and went to sleep. Maybe there might have been cuddling and some light snogging, but sleeping was paramount to shagging that night. He briefly wondered if there was some way he could get himself moved out of the Gryffindor boys dorm and into the Room of Requirement, before drifting off in the arms of his lovers and into the arms of Morpheus.

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Harry was alternating now. One day he'd spend flying and practicing his Quidditch skills, gradually and slowly getting better with every second he spent on a broom. The next, he would spend training and working on his magic skills and general abilities. The day after that, he'd be back on the Quidditch Pitch, trying to wring every last bit of speed and maneuverability out of the broom that he possibly could. And then he might change things up and have a Prank day every now and then, trying out new pranks or redoing others simply because they were that much fun, or he'd have a Date Day where he spent the whole day catering to and learning more and more about the young women he loved and was beginning to fall in love with.

About once every five resets or so, he would fly down to London, break into the Ministry of Magic and Department of Mysteries after closing, and trigger Voldemort's trap to test and see how he was fairing in his training. He could now go toe-to-toe with the every one of the squad sent in after him, including Bellatrix, but only one-on-one. If they ever outnumbered him by more than two to one odds, his only chance was to evade and flee and maybe ambush or lead into a trap. He'd managed to time how long it was before Voldemort lost patience and entered the fray himself, and was equally pleased and dismayed to discover he had roughly one and three quarter hours from when Harry first entered the Ministry to when Voldemort finally showed his ugly face. The dismay came in discovering that it still took him an average of two hours to take out the squad of Death Eaters sent in to trap him. But that was still plenty of time to thin the herd quite a lot. Enough that Voldemort didn't have any real backup when he finally showed up.

Harry himself still ended up either dead, captured, or on his way to Azkaban regardless whether the Minister saw Voldemort with his own eyes or not. But at least he could beat both Malfoy and Bellatrix now. Before, they always managed to have some last second trick up their sleeves that would wind up with him at their mercy after he thought he'd already gotten past them. Now, he knew their tricks well enough that he could counter them without too much trouble, and he was good enough that if he got them to underestimate him, he could overwhelm them before they even knew what hit them. Every other Death Eater on the squad was easy compared to those two, not that the others weren't lethal enough in their own right, but compared to Malfoy, the king of dirty tricks, and Bellatrix, queen of raw unhinged fury, they were just guys in masks that liked to use dark curses.

Most days though, he was spending on improving his flying and Quidditch skills. On his own, he figured he knew how to push his limits, but when he started listening to the criticisms of his girlfriends, and other friends, discovering whole new ways of improving himself and correcting his faults, he found himself pushed to new heights, both literally and figuratively.

He also, finally, discovered why it was he got so tired just from flying around on a broom. Part of it was the G forces and speed he flew at, and the muscles needed to stay on the broom while he flew it at over a hundred miles an hour and executed a three G ninety degree,

or tighter, turn. The rest of it, however, was the discovery that a flying broom wasn't just enchanted and shipped out so anybody and everybody could make it go. No, much like a wand, the magic broom developed a symbiosis with the wizard that used it. To get more technical about it, the broom drew on the ambient magic the wizard gave off as well as the conscious magic used to direct and control the charms that were already in place on the enchanted tool.

On a whim, mostly just so he could see what would happen, Harry tried channeling a more deliberate and direct flow of magic into his broom one day. He breached the lower atmosphere and was a quarter way to Low Earth Orbit before he even realized what he'd done. That was not an exaggeration. He had his friends time him and discovered that the boasting of the acceleration of the Firebolt was in fact quite true, however the top speed didn't go much more than a single mph over that. And then Harry tried boosting the broom with his magic and he hit one fifty in three seconds flat, and kept going until he hit five hundred at ten seconds, and fifteen hundred at thirty seconds. He topped out at five Gs when going straight up, and could do maybe five point five when diving, although his robes certainly didn't survive such speeds without consequence. By the time he landed his broom, he was wearing rags that were stuck to his body because he'd applied wandless sticking charms to them.

Of course that was just straight up speed acceleration. The really impressive stuff happened when he started applying extra magic to the other features of his broom, like its maneuverability and braking charms. The phrase 'turn on a dime' had nothing on what he could do now. Turn on the tip of a sharpened pin would be more accurate.

After this discovery, Harry had a whole new bracket of barriers to overcome and skills to master. His normal broom skills were maintaining at the top tier, for still being a student at Hogwarts. His 'Boosted' broom skills, however, were actually worse than what it was like when he first rode a broom. Not quite as bad as Neville or Ron, thankfully, but if he were honest with himself, when Boosting his broom's performance, his control was near equal with what Malfoy could do, at age eleven.

Unfortunately, Harry had no way of knowing what he could do to further his normal broom skills. The only professional Quidditch match he had ever seen had been the World Cup during the

summer between his Third and Fourth Years. And while he read the same magazines and books that Ron and Hermione did on the subject, without actually seeing it for himself, he had no clue on how to improve or expand on his skills.

And then he got the attention of the rest of the Gryffindor Quidditch team, and soon enough they were holding an impromptu training day, with Angelina as Team Captain directing him in his training personally "to make up for lost time" and making sure he was up to snuff. She, and the rest of the team showed him and helped him to develop his own versions of the more famous Seeker moves, as well as more general, and more advanced flying broom skills to help him in general Quidditch flying. When he started showing them that he knew that much already during the morning hours when it was just him practicing alone, they all banded together and showed him a few more tricks, all just to see if he could pull them off. Quite often he couldn't at first, and it would take him a number of resets to figure it out on his own, but when he started demonstrating that he knew all of that, Angelina had him working more on his basics, and even rallied Madam Hooch into helping him out.

The Flying Instructor was more than a bit skeptical of his story about how Umbridge "let him" have his Firebolt back, but she didn't let it stop her from showing him what a real flier could do on a broom. As much as the team knew and could help him with learning, it was a drop in a bucket compared to the treasure trove of experience that was Madam Rolanda Hooch.

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"All right Potter," Madam Hooch snapped, fists on her hips, "Show me what you've learned since the last time I saw you on a broom. And if you do better than Weasley at that last game, I may show you some things that even you've never seen before."

"Yes ma'am," Harry grinned and jumped on his broom. He then paused and asked, "Normal flight, or Boosted?"

Madam Hooch blinked, surprised. "Boosted? What are you talking about, Potter?"

"Well, Boosting is my personal name for it. It's when I use my magic to enhance the charms already in place in the broom, making it go faster, or to increase its maneuverability, make it so I can stop in an instant without having to slow down first, things like that," he answered.

"And... you figured this out on your own?" she prompted.

"Well, yeah," he shrugged. He had after all, though it was because of training with the team that he'd had the idea in the first place.

"Bloody genius," he heard the instructor curse under her breath. Out loud she said, "Just normal flight for now, Potter. And a word of advice, it's actually called Ramping. And knowing how to do it is the difference between the Minor and the Major Leagues. Potter..."

"Yes, Madam Hooch?"

"Just... so I can know, how much can you ramp that thing?" she gestured to the Firebolt.

He shrugged again and answered honestly, curious as to how she'd react. "I took it fifty miles, more or less, straight up in a little under two minutes. Hermione figured out that was roughly five Gs of constant acceleration. I managed five point five in a dive."

"Five Gs?" Madam Hooch exclaimed. "How did you stay on your broom? And why isn't that thing so much ash blowing in the wind?"

Harry shrugged again, taking off on a loop around the pitch, shouting his answer back to her as he pushed what he could do on his broom, non-ramped. Unusual term, he liked his name for it better though.

"How I stayed on was simple, I stuck my hands to the broom with magic! How it didn't burn itself up, well, I also boosted the durability charms! I tried to boost... er, ramp it further, but I couldn't get it to go any faster than that, though I'm pretty sure I could handle a lot faster!"

"I have no doubt you could," she said, unaware that he could hear her perfectly well, thanks to the same listening charm the Twins put on their Extendable Ears having been put on the his robes that he

left right by her. She then shouted so he could 'hear' her, "You could very well propel that broom of yours to the moon, Potter! But while you're on it, the same magic you use to ramp it won't let you kill yourself either! It keeps you from going faster than you really can handle!"

"Oh," Harry had to admit, that made sense.

He then proceeded to show Madam Hooch what he could do. Every last exercise, move, skill, and trick he could pull off on a broom without boosting, ramping it up with his magic. It took him about an hour to show her, finishing with his usual lap through and around all the rafters and beams of the Pitch before landing in front of her with a bit of a flare.

"That," she said to him, her expression stern, "was exactly what I expected from you Potter. You're a natural on a broom, no doubt about that, but you're still a complete amateur. Show me what you can really do. Ramp that thing as much as you can and do everything you just did, again!"

Surprised, but determined to prove his mastery, Harry started channeling his magic into the broom and proceeded through all of the same exercises he'd just completed, but at ten times the speed. His control was... well he had to be honest with himself if he was going to improve, his control was absolute shite. He could go straight out and in a long turn without any difficulty, but the Wronski's Feint was dangerous, even for him, and the Sloth Grip Roll tended to turn into an out of control corkscrew if he wasn't careful. He wasn't even going to try going through the Pitch rafters, his reaction time wasn't that good, yet. He didn't bother with any flare, after he finished the final exercise, he just flew straight at Madam Hooch and went from top speed (somewhere around six thousand miles per hour) to an absolute stop right in front of her.

"That," her expression was more angry than stern now, "was pathetic, Potter! How do you expect to go professional with a performance like that? And what are you, a helpless princess? Why are you so squeamish all of a sudden? Where's the gusto that I saw not an hour ago?"

"I'm good, Madam Hooch, but I'm not that good, yet," he said, trying to retain his temper.

"Good? Hah!" she laughed in his face. "You're good for a fifteen year old Seeker on his school Quidditch team. Realistically? You're hardly worth mentioning. When you grow up someday, I have no doubt you'll be a hell of a flier. Provided you correct a couple of glaring faults first, of course."

"Faults? I've been working on..." he started to explain, but she interrupted him.

"Your speed? Your agility? Your reaction time? Hand-eye coordination? The way you adjust for course correction? Wind speed? Cross winds? And every time something catches your eye, Potter, you have this nasty habit of tracking it and flinching when you finally start paying attention to everything else around you once again. You've got a long way to go, and I'm not going to be your personal trainer, Potter. No matter how much I like you."

Harry blinked, and then considered. Unfortunately, everything she'd told him was true. Angelina had noticed his faults with course correction when he was hit with high speed cross winds. Luna and Ginny had taken note that his reaction time and hand-eye coordination could be better than what it was, given what he'd become capable of with his wand and magic, he should already be better in both regards. He wasn't quite sure what was wrong with his speed and agility, though he was certainly willing to work on it.

"OK, then how about you just train me for today, and just today?" he offered her a way out. "Help me figure out where I'm lacking, tell me what I can do to improve it, and show me some other things I can do. I'll do all the work after that on my own. I promise. Just one day, and I'll never bother you like this again, but I'll still credit you with teaching me everything I know about flying a broom."

She seemed to hem and haw for a few moments, but in the end, she shot him a glaring smirk and started ordering him to do this and that and warned him to always do exactly what she said without hesitation, otherwise she was through. Harry happily did exactly what she said without any hesitation and was soon to become quite familiar with Hooch's brand of personal criticism.

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Madam Hooch did a double take and repeated, "Ramped? You can ramp your broom, Potter?"

"Yes ma'am," he replied with a confident grin.

"Let's see it then," she ordered, suddenly anxious to see what this student of hers could really do.

Harry just gave her a boyish grin and took off at his top speed. It had taken him a while (roughly thirteen to fifteen proverbial months) but he had finally gotten to the point in his flying that he could achieve maximum acceleration at all times, where before he had a bit of a build up, slowly accelerating until he couldn't push it any faster. The trick to it was that instead of trickling his magic into the broom at a small yet steady pace was to work in bursts of overwhelming magic power. He was warned that it would burn out the charms on the broom faster than normal, meaning that instead of ten or a hundred years it would barely last one, but for one day Harry could risk it without too much worry.

It turned out, the better he got at his top speed, in both control, bringing out greater speed, and working on his agility and reaction speed, the better he got when he wasn't ramping his broom. Before, he actually had to try to dodge obstacles and maneuver through the rafters and beams of the Pitch, and now he made it look easy. In fact it had gotten so easy and repetitive that he felt he was losing what edge he had managed to gain and started constructing a number of completely random obstacles and tight spaces to squeeze through and come up with new and more interesting ways of getting through them. He only crashed every half hour now instead of every few minutes when training like that. He could now dive at top speed from a distance of only one kilometer and successfully pull out a few centimeters above the ground. If he tried

it any lower than that, he would either have to pull out sooner, or definitely crash.

Madam Hooch was suitably impressed after all this time, and it showed when he appeared before her, finished with his demonstration after only half an hour.

"That," she said, her expression stern, "was adequate, Potter. Very nearly the average level of performance for a Professional Quidditch Player, if only barely. Damn impressive for a boy your age, no doubt about that, but still only barely adequate as it was."

"Thank you Madam Hooch," he appreciated the genuine praise for what it was. After more than a year of her tutelage and daily criticisms about how pathetic he was, being called anything close to adequate was high praise indeed. He was really glad he'd taken to flying his broom down to London rather than flying as a bird or dragon, it really helped.

"So, what is it you're wanting from me? Tips? A few moves you haven't seen yet?" she asked, crossing her arms, expression still stern.

"Well, I know that my reaction time is still not quite up to snuff, and I can probably kick up my speed a lot more, and that I need to get out of my flinching habit, but if there's anything else that you noticed that I need to work on, I would be truly grateful. As for showing me some extra moves, well, I wouldn't presume to..."

"You're not presuming anything Potter, I offered. And it's good that you know your limitations. If your father was half as good on a broom as you are, he'd probably have been a real star. Shame his ego trumped his skill and he never worked on his faults. Glad to see you're not repeating his mistakes."

"Yes Ma'am," Harry nodded, once again accepting the criticism at face value. He'd already heard from her all the stories about his father, so he wouldn't rise to the bait. This time.

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"Let's see it then," she ordered, suddenly anxious to see what this student of hers could really do.

A quarter of an hour later, and that was just because he wanted to show off a bit, Rolanda Hooch stood there agape. Harry appeared before her out of nowhere, actually from three hundred yards off, but in less than three seconds all the same, and closed her open mouth for her. That seemed to snap her out of it as she shook herself and glared at Harry, half angry, half in awe.

"Where did you learn all that, Potter?" she snapped at him.

He smiled and answered honestly, "From you Madam Hooch."

"Very funny. I saw three impossible feats out there, performed like they were old hat. It takes years to develop that kind of skill, and I should know, since I actually came up with those tricks myself. *Since*, I started teaching at Hogwarts! Therefore there is no way anyone in the world could possibly have known those air tricks to put in some magazine or to learn for themselves and start teaching others. And that doesn't count for all the other insane, useless moves you just pulled off. What have you been learning to do? Fly through the trenches in the new war?"

Hm, that actually wasn't a bad idea, he thought, but shook it off. "I've been trying to increase my agility, Madam. Is there some other way that I could pull that off?"

"How about try dodging Bludgers!" she shouted at him, throwing her hands up in defeat. He decided to not show her any of her own

moves anymore. Not until after he talked her into keep training him that is. In the mean time, he decided to take her advice and pulled out the Bludgers and as Dobby had done in his Second Year, homed them in on him and spent the rest of the day working on his agility that way. She was right, dodging stationary obstacles was nothing like avoiding moving targets that could react and move in response to himself. By nightfall he had two broken arms, a dislocated shoulder, and a shattered clavicle, but it didn't matter because he neglected to recapture the Bludgers and they had started double-teaming him and each smashed his head in from both sides, instantly killing him.

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After that point, Harry went back to getting help from the team, and was not disappointed. The Creevey brothers could barely keep up with him as it was, and with the Chasers acting as the live version of Bludgers, he found whole new levels of what he could get himself to do. He also came up with a new and interesting way of testing himself and Ron, by having the youngest Weasley son in the Keeper Position, and Harry acting as a self-flying Quaffle. If Ron could tag him, he won. If Harry got past him and slipped through one of the hoops, he won. It always took a while for Ron to catch on to Harry's rhythm, but after the fifth or sixth pass he started managing to tag every single time. At first, Harry considered it a big improvement on his part when he managed to get past his friend every third or fourth pass, and then every other pass after they'd both gotten into the rhythm of things.

When he tried facing off against homing Bludgers again, he made sure it was only one instead of two that could double-team him and still found himself ending the days with a broken something or other. Not exactly a masochist, (however much fun the riding crop and whips were in Ginny and Luna's let alone Hermione's hands), Harry only did things like that when he was feeling particularly overconfident. Instead, he decided to unleash the Snitch and after giving it a suitable head start, chased it for a while. He caught it every time of course, but what surprised him was how he couldn't predict the Snitch, even after giving it the same amount of time, it was never in the same place from reset to reset. It was, after all, designed to react to his movements, not any kind of predetermined program or choice. And because Harry was the only random factor

in the time loop, so too was the Snitch. Pretty soon he was chasing that thing everywhere.

The next time he approached Madam Hooch "for some pointers", she was still stunned at his new found skill, but at least she wasn't irrationally angry at him for 'stealing her moves' and thus was still willing to teach him a bit. She also noted that while he was still only barely adequate, his agility and reaction speed were more in line with his overall skill now.

For a time, he sort of stayed level, making no discernible progress and maintaining his current skill level. He began to wonder if maybe he had hit the ceiling in what he could actually do. And then he happened upon an odd discovery.

He still flinched every time he went from focusing on one thing back to focusing on his surroundings.

Why was that? He wanted to know.

It wasn't even noticeable to someone that wasn't also a Quidditch expert. And for that matter it wasn't even a big thing, he wouldn't even call it a flinch, not even a wince, more like a brief mental admonishment of his distraction that had him widening his eyes briefly and then his gaze sort of shooting all over the place before settling into full peripheral once again. Calling that a flinch was like calling a puff of hot moisture in the winter time a cloud.

Didn't change the fact that he did it though, and he still wanted to know why that was.

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"No way!" Ron screamed out, "You've got the flinch?"

"Uh... no, I've just been informed that I have *A* flinch," Harry answered.

"Sort of a lapse in time when you go from focusing on one thing to refocusing on everything else around you?" Ginny asked excitedly. "Not even a real flinch, but your eyes sort of shoot all over the place before calming again?"

Harry blinked and looked at her and Ron suspiciously.

"OK, I'll bite. What is 'the flinch'?" he asked, doing air-quotes for the term.

"It's not like that Harry," Ginny assured him.

"No, it's better!" Ron exclaimed, practically vibrating with excitement. "Show him, Hermione! It's in that article from WIZARDING World of Sports about Dangerous Dai Llewellyn. He talked about the best Seekers always having a flinch when younger that is a sign of having a trait that will make them the best Seekers in the world! Go on, tell him!"

"I would, if you would let me!" Hermione huffed and pulled out a book.

Harry read the book Hermione put under his nose. He even flipped through the pages, his fingers going up and down through them a bit as he quickly read through all the lines and paragraphs. He was actually finished reading it by the time Ron started talking about it, which was only enough time for him to eat and swallow the other half of his meal.

"Basically, Harry," said Hermione as he was reading, "Dai Llewellyn was by and large acknowledged to be one of the best Quidditch players to have ever played the game. He was reported to have said on several occasions that some of the best Seekers he ever played against had a, well he called it a flinch. They always seemed to be able to track the Snitch no matter where it went and could often find it before anyone else even caught sight of it. Interviews with some of these expert Seekers revealed that they didn't even know they had a flinch and that they just happened to see the Snitch first and that they simply made sure to always keep it in sight, tracking it with their eyes no matter what."

"So, no clues as to any special trick they used?" he asked, flipping back and forth through the pages a bit to see if he could find the answer for himself.

"No, not that the Seekers themselves could tell anyone about that is," she answered.

"What about this statement here, where Llewellyn said something about 'Spacial Awareness'?" asked Harry, pointing at the passage.

"That was an educated guess on his part," said Hermione, snapping the book shut.

"Hm," mumbled Ron, scratching his chin. "Harry... have you ever flown a broom blindfolded?"

The whole table blinked and just stared at the redheaded Keeper.

"How did I let you talk me into this?" Harry asked Ron as the latter finished tying a blindfold around the former's head. They were both currently on their brooms.

"Trust me, this will work," Ron assured him. "It will help you be more aware of your spacey warehouse. Or whatever it's called. If you can fly blindfolded, then that means you can devote more attention to finding the Snitch, and it may even help you get rid of your tell when you flinch."

"It's not a flinch, just me berating myself for not paying attention to the right thing at the right time!" Harry argued.

"Yeah, so wouldn't you stop doing that if you were able to pay attention to everything all at once, the right thing included, all at the right time, or basically all the time?"

"It doesn't work like that, Ron," Harry let out an insufferable sigh, but he left the blindfold on and he stayed on his broom. "And whatever you do, DO NOT release the Bludgers!"

"I'm not so sure about this, Ron," said Angelina nervously. "I certainly don't want Harry killed, no matter how much a better Seeker this may make him, it's not worth his life."

"Oh, don't worry about that, Angelina," Harry was the one to reassure her. "If I'm actually in any danger, blindfold comes off at moment's notice and I'm good enough to keep myself from dying. Can't say anything about being on the disability list, or spending the rest of the year in the Hospital Wing, but I certainly won't die just from this. Now, uh, what should I do first? No dives!"

"How about we just start with the basics," Katie suggested.

"Yeah," Angelina agreed. "Harry, do a circuit around the Pitch. We'll warn you if it seems like you're going to crash into anything. Let us know if you have any problems or want to move on."

"All right, I can do that," Harry took a deep breath and kicked his broom into gear.

He made sure to keep it ramped down, he wasn't suicidal after all. After what he felt was the completion of the first circuit, he stopped and asked, "How was that?"

"Uh... a bit shallow actually," said Ginny, who immediately got hushed from half the team.

Harry frowned and thought about where he should be, spatially speaking. If he was correct, he should be about twenty-five to thirty feet straight out from the bleachers, somewhere to his right. Adjusting his flight accordingly, he stopped when he felt his leg brush up against the edge of the seating tower. Unfortunately just from that, he had no way of knowing which of the eight towers he was up against, but judging from where his friends' voices were coming from, as well as his memory of where they had been sitting, he came up with a (hopefully) pretty accurate map of the Quidditch Pitch in his head.

He took off, considerably faster than before, and stuck to the outer edge, adjusting his altitude according to where he believed the towers were, going down between them and then going up to get over them. He did it twice, just to be sure he sometimes bumped into the towers just so he could confirm they were where he thought they were.

And then the oddest thing happened to him.

He heard the flutter of wings.

He stopped and called out, "Did somebody just release the Snitch?"

"See, I told you he'd be able to tell the moment it started fluttering!" he heard Ron say from somewhere to his left. That's odd, he

thought he'd been on his right, and to the rear. And farther away. Apparently he wasn't quite as good 'seeing' blind as he'd thought he was.

The sound of wings came closer, and then farther away, too far away for him to hear where he was hovering at the moment. He moved in the direction he'd last heard it, trying to keep the map of the Quidditch Pitch straight in his head. He tried to track it, but he wasn't nearly so confident in his flying when he couldn't see anything, and as such he couldn't keep up with the flying gold ball, even when it was in reach. He could not catch the Snitch, no matter what he did.

By the end of the day, he hadn't even gotten close to the thing, save for when it flew right up to him. He had, fortunately, gotten a bit better at flying blind. Enough that he was flying confidently in open air and had figured out how to sense when large obstructions got in his way so he could properly dodge the stands and goal posts, and once or twice a couple of Bludgers.

"Not to worry, mate," Ron clapped him on the back as the team made its way back up to the castle, "You'll get it eventually. And imagine how good you'll be when you don't even need to see the Snitch to catch it! And you got loads better from when you first started! Keep up this pace and you'll be a Quidditch legend before the end of the school year!"

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Turned out, having the "flinch" really was a good thing. Because it drew Harry's attention to several of his major weaknesses when it came to flying. Most of them were things Madam Hooch had already pointed out to him through her instruction, yet he hadn't understood or been able to identify on his own. A few were things even she hadn't known to look for.

Harry started flying blindfolded all the time now. He even once tried to fly as a bat with his eyes closed. He'd shifted to one of the species of bat he could change into before he'd gone ten feet off the ground. That helped a lot more than just listening to Madam Hooch lecture, or conjure up theories with Ron and Angelina. Bats used echolocation, and while they weren't truly blind, their eyes were

more sensitive to light than most knew, so they either squinted or shut their eyes more often than not. As such, they relied not just on their hearing, but their smell and the sense of touch, which was a great deal more potent when the body is covered in sensitive hair and flying through the air, wind and shifts in pressure become a lot more noticeable.

A few nights, he actually went out and hunted like the bats around the castle did.

At first, he had a slight revulsion to eating insects, until he actually tried it and to a bat's tongue, a good fly or moth tasted the same as chicken nuggets and pigs in a blanket. Once he'd hunted like a bat, he had the final clue he needed to finally catch the Snitch while flying blind.

It still took him about a year and a half to actually catch it that way, but he was constantly improving over that time, and his flying was getting better with each passing day as he got better at flying and chasing an invisible target while blindfolded.

He even came up with a number of different new Seeker moves, most having to do with psyching out or distracting the other Seeker, but three were surprisingly effective ways for catching the Snitch quickly and almost effortlessly. He had both Hermione and Ron check and confirm, but nobody had ever come up with even similar moves, therefore he decided to name them all after him.

He called them the Potter's Wheel, Potter's Kiln, and Potter's Rib.

The Wheel was much like the image the name invoked, where Harry started as close to the center of the field as he could and spun out in an ever-widening spiral around and throughout the entire Pitch. Not only did it let him cover a greater distance that much faster, but when he'd tried it out with the rest of the team, he found that it allowed him to interfere on his team's behalf and for those not expecting it, it was always a surprise to see him moving so fast. The longest it took him to catch the Snitch this way was fifteen minutes, and that was when he started lower than the Snitch was released at, as far as altitude went.

The Kiln was a risky, potentially double-edged move that Harry didn't expect to work that often, but when the conditions were just

right he fully intended to pull this move off as often as he could. It involved tailing the Snitch as closely and as often as possible, but instead of trying to get behind it or corner it or catch it out right, he would 'burn' it by doing a high speed flyby of the Snitch. Do it enough times and the wings start to go out of synch with one another, slowing the Snitch way down, and making it easier to track and thereby catch. But, as it was said, it could just as easily turn out to be to the advantage of the other Seeker, unless they were thoroughly distracted beforehand of course.

The Rib was by far his most favorite. And to his knowledge, which by now included Ron's and Hermione's, and over half the team's knowledge about Quidditch as well, there was no other Seeker on a broom in the entire world that could pull it off, save for him. It had taken him over two years to develop the skill in the first place, but because of that skill, being able to fly blind on a broom as well as track and catch a Snitch under the same circumstances, he could actually track the Snitch from the moment it was released, no matter where it went to, provided it was within a hundred yard radius around him, he could sniff it out. And from there, it was child's play to merely place himself in the Snitch's flight path and catch it the moment it tried to change direction on him. His reaction time had gone way up too.

Therefore, the Potter's Rib was quite simply snatching the Snitch less than a minute into the game.

He could not yet say that he was the best Seeker in the world. Best Seeker at Hogwarts, well he was that before time loop started. He wouldn't even call himself the best Seeker in Scotland, let alone the British Isles. Madam Hooch would and in fact did, the next time he trained with her, call him "decent", like a rookie in the Regional Leagues. The Regional Leagues were the equivalent of the "Minor Leagues" that you find in most all Muggle Sports. Low money, low income, but still professional in the strictest definition of the term.

If you made it to the National, let alone the International Leagues, well that said it all right there. Krum had been recruited to the International Leagues while he was still in school. And while Harry liked to believe he was good enough to beat Krum, he knew by now that he saved time and progress by not lying to himself.

Hm...

Krum and Hermione had exchanged their addresses and everybody in the school knew whenever she got a letter from him just from the noise Ron made over it, so they were definitely communicating. The question then became, how to get Krum out in less than a day and agree to show Harry a thing or two about being a Professional Seeker.

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"I am here, Potter," Viktor Krum grumbled as he stepped out onto Hogwarts Quidditch field, "Now tell me vot dis is bout."

Harry shrugged and then mounted his broom and released the Snitch in his hand. He let it fly for about ten seconds before reaching out and grabbing it, making it look easy.

Krum blinked and seemed to think about what he'd just seen for a second or two. He laughed, sneering at Harry still on his broom, and shook his head. He turned and started to walk away. Harry let the Snitch go again. Krum slowed and then turned back around.

They both waited, ten seconds, twenty seconds, thirty seconds, sixty, ninety...

Krum stared, impressed in spite of himself. The Snitch had ample time to hide itself after five full minutes. Harry had flown right at it and caught it in less than ten seconds from the moment he actually started Seeking it. Krum was impressed that Potter had also known exactly where the Snitch was the whole time. He was not impressed with his flying.

"You want tips, is that it?" Krum asked.

Harry grinned. He then pulled out three slips of paper or parchment, Krum couldn't tell from the distance. They flew from Harry's to Krum's hands in an instant.

They were photographs. Magical photographs. That moved. And were of Hermione Granger. One of her in her Hogwarts school uniform. One of her in a Scandinavian Tavern Wench costume. And the third of her in a muggle costume that Krum recognized as "sexy

business suit for women" also called "Sexy Librarian" look. As Krum stood there holding them, all three pictures began to slowly remove their clothing and prance around, showing assets Krum had dreamed of but never gotten close to seeing. The pictures stopped and stepped out of the pictures and put their clothes back on before they even got half way, returning when they looked presentable once more.

"Want to see the rest of the set? Show me your best moves, and everything else you know that I don't about being a Professional Quidditch player," Harry dropped the hammer.

Krum liked to believe he was better than that, that he was Hermione's friend, and that he should just take these to her and demand that she leave England and come home with him. He also liked to believe that Potter would never do something like this. But then he thought about it some more and it didn't take him long to recognize that he was holding three magical photographs of Hermione performing a striptease.

Unlike with muggle photography, it was not possible to mess with or adjust a magical photograph. As the ancient people once believed when the technology was first invented, magical photography really did capture some of the essence of the person, and that is what animated it in the first place. If Hermione ever did this at all, she did it three times over, which threw all manner of coercion out the door.

"Know any Seventh Years this hot?" Krum asked, grabbing his broom while pocketing the photos.

"I'll introduce you to Gryffindor's Team Captain. Can't promise anything, but I don't think you'll have too much trouble. Just keep in mind she's a Chaser, first and foremost," Harry replied.

"I am beginning to regret not transferring here ven I had the chance," Krum grumbled and then suddenly switched gears.

If Harry thought Madam Hooch was strict, he had no clue what he was getting into with Krum.

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Harry didn't actually have as much to learn from Krum as he'd thought he did.

Ten days, two weeks minus the weekends, and some time to practice on his own what he'd learned from the Professional Seeker, and the next time he saw Krum, he was actually out-flying him at every turn. Time after that, he challenged Krum to a Seeker's duel, only to be turned down flat, even after using all the different ways he'd convinced him to come to Hogwarts before. The moment he brought up a challenge between the two of them, Krum laughed at him and left.

So, Harry tried publicly challenging him to a duel. Krum refused to come to Hogwarts, and the PR people got involved and it was scheduled for the following week. Next time, Harry added the stipulation of "anywhere, anyplace, anyhow, today!" and maybe a few more insults.

Harry was taken up to the Bulgarian Team's Quidditch Stadium, via Portkey, and the whole Bulgarian Team was there to back Viktor up. Harry, unfortunately, just had the alternates of the Bulgarian Team to side with him, so he decided to try doing it alone. Though he did insist that it was a Seeker challenge.

Obviously, the first time he lost. It was close though, closer than any of the Bulgarians cared to admit.

What was really surprising however, was that he also lost the four times after that too. Krum had been holding out on him, and used new and better tricks and skills on a broom than Harry had ever seen before, and even after Harry managed to succeed in copying them, Krum always had another trick up his sleeve. The man was an absolute genius when it came to flying and catching the Snitch.

To be clear, there wasn't any cheating, or fake Snitches, or Snitch magnets or illegal interference from Krum's teammates on his behalf. Krum really was that good. Harry's respect for the Bulgarian Seeker grew with each match they held against one another. Not that Krum could remember those matches, or see how quickly Harry was improving.

Something that Harry neglected to keep in mind, something that was at the forefront of Krum's, Madam Hooch's, and all the professional

Quidditch players he was playing in front of, was that physically speaking, Harry was still only fifteen and a half years old. Krum himself wasn't even recruited until he was sixteen!

After he was recruited, and special exceptions made at his school and with his parents, he spent five months in a sort of Quidditch Boot Camp that pushed a sixteen year old boy into becoming Professional grade quality on a broom, spending fifteen hours a day on the broom, and another three going over plays and maneuvers on the ground with the rest of the team. Krum was exceptional in that he actually spent twenty hours a day on his broom, at least once a week during days off and studied outside of the team meetings putting in more time than almost anyone else on the team.

Even during their first match, Krum believed Harry to be as good as he was at the same age on a broom. By the fifth match, Krum and all his teammates and the coaches believed that Harry was as good as Krum was after the Bulgarian Seeker had graduated the Boot Camp. What made this even more impressive, not that anyone could know it, was that where Krum had spent five months, eighteen-twenty hours a day to go from a talented young player to the Professional Seeker he now was, Harry had done in one month!

The levels he was quickly approaching were where he was better than Krum. Fortunately for Harry's drive, there were still a lot of other Quidditch players that were better than Krum. Unfortunately, neither Harry nor Krum had the means of getting access to those players in order to test themselves against them.

For the moment, however, Harry was still facing off against Krum in daily matches and learning more and more to add to his skills with each match. It took a while. Not a very long time, but it wasn't a short amount of time for Harry at all, but eventually he got good enough that Krum couldn't win. Not that Harry was winning instead, but that Krum had to spend more time blocking and tricking Harry than going after the Snitch. The problems Harry had was that he wanted to develop counters to those tricks, or develop his own versions, so he kept letting himself be tricked. And occasionally, when it was a new one, he might have just plain fallen for it. Regardless, what that meant was that neither of them caught the Snitch before sunset, and then the stadium lights were turned on and they kept right on playing. Eventually, it got to the point where

they were still playing when seven A.M. rolled around the next morning and time reset.

It wasn't long before Harry believed they had reached a stalemate of sorts. He still couldn't beat Krum outright, and when they allowed the game to prolong, the two Seekers just kept egging the other on, challenging themselves to be better than they currently were. Unfortunately, despite the only one to remember such matches, Harry wasn't getting better than Krum, instead staying in much the same skill range as he was.

So that avenue closed off to him, for now, Harry went back to learning from Madam Hooch, showing her his skills only a little bit at a time, and occasionally revealing an extra skill that she couldn't know that he knew, and blame it all on natural talent. After facing Krum for so long though, the inexperienced Gryffindor failed to consider one thing.

He was now as good as a Professional Quidditch Player, albeit one who was also still in school.

Madam Hooch was an experienced enough Instructor that she could tell that right off the bat. So the very first time that Harry came to her after playing against Krum for several proverbial months, she silently said to herself that she would see about getting some Scouts out to the school later in the week. When Harry asked her for tips on improving himself, she gave him some drills that were the same as what Professional Quidditch Players did during their weekly, if not daily practices.

The next time he went to her for training, not that it was any different for her, she gave him the same drills, but had more urgency in her thought to get some recruiters to Hogwarts to have a look at Harry Potter. After a week of this, Madam Hooch actually gave him a dozen different drills, also all done by Professional Players in their official practices. She planned on having several of her close personal friends that were in fact on Professional Teams, and a couple people in the Ministry she knew come out the very next day. Not that she told Harry any of this, he was just doggedly doing drill after drill, working on ways to improve himself more and more.

By the time Madam Hooch had given him every last drill that could possibly be done on a broom, by a Quidditch Player or Racer or just

about any profession you'd care to name that involves a broom, and had even invented a couple of new ones just to see if he could pull it off (he usually could by the third Reset of that particular drill) she'd had enough.

From her perspective, after having been grounded since the first game of the season, Harry Potter came to her, asking her to help him out with his flying skills, with a weak excuse as to how he had his broom back, and then innocently displayed Professional Quality skills on a broom, enough to where she would lay money on him against anybody in the Regional leagues. At first, she might think he was having her on, but when he came to her after showing his skills, with self-reproach and determination in his eyes, she changed her mind.

For the first time ever, from both perspectives, Madam Hooch merely told him to wait while she made a call and to do some warm up drills while she did so. She looked back over her shoulder on the way to the castle and saw that his warm up drills were also Professional Quality (the harder of the ones she'd been having him do the past few resets). She ran the rest of the way up to the castle and used the first Floo she came across.

Less than an hour later, Harry was demonstrating his skills for half a dozen recruiters, and three different Quidditch teams, all Regional league. Half an hour after that, the Seekers of all three teams, plus their back up Seekers were at Hogwarts, each of them queuing up to face Harry in a Seeker duel, much like he'd been playing against Krum. That one of those teams was the Chudley Cannons made Ron's day and then some.

At first he faced off against who he was told were the front runners for each team. They all used variations of tricks he'd picked up from Krum and had counters for ages ago. In fact, seeing them fly and how they hunted the Snitch, he would say they were about as good as Krum, but not much better. One of them, the Cannons' Seeker, was actually about as good as he would say Cho was. Except faster and more agile, but as far as being a Seeker, no better than the Ravenclaw Seeker.

Then the 'backups' came to play, and Harry was thrown for a loop. The first of them blazed so far past him that he didn't know what had happened until long after it was over. The second was just as bad,

and the last of the so called 'backup' Seekers had Harry just staying there on his broom with his mouth wide open.

Then he did a double-take and started laughing.

When asked what was so funny, he asked in return if the last three really were the "backups", using air quotes and as much sarcasm as he could squeeze between laughs. Even the Cannon Seeker, who was the actual Seeker and not the backup, was so far above his league that he was in awe. How was it that they kept losing? He wondered.

And then he was given a minute to review what had just happened, and realized what he'd done wrong, and just how bad the Cannon Seeker truly was. Asking for one more round, he was given it, and Ramped his broom to the max the moment things started off. He literally flew rings around the Cannon Seeker before snatching the Snitch almost literally from right under his nose. The Ballycastle Bats' Seeker managed to turn it into an actual race for the Snitch, which Harry won, despite both of them being on Firebolts and both Ramping their brooms as much as they could. The Caerphilly Catapults' Seeker made it a real challenge, and had completely different moves than Krum, all of them quite effective too. Harry, however, decided to show off some of his own moves, ones that he'd developed on his own in his training with Madam Hooch and Krum.

It was close, closer than it should have been by everyone's reckoning, but once again Harry was shown that he wasn't quite yet in the Pro's league.

If he only knew...

The Seeker he'd faced, bearing the weight and legend of Dai "Dangerous" Llewellyn on his shoulders, gave Harry a clap on the back and told him to look them up when he graduated. Behind the young Potter's back however, he wiped the sweat from his brow and had to be helped off the field and into the locker rooms there where he sat under a cold shower until his lips turned blue, so that way he could at least blame his shivering on the cold water, and not the fact that he had quite nearly been schooled by a fifteen year old still in school!

At dinner that night, nobody was talking about the missing Umbridge, or arrested Snape or anything that they normally talked about. No, they were all, every last one of them, talking about Harry Potter getting to play with Professional Quidditch Players, and actually beat five out of six of their Seekers!

Ron especially wouldn't shut up about how he'd managed to get all the Cannons' autographs and how it was so cool that Harry had a spot with them, guaranteed the day after he graduated. Harry laughed along with the rest of his friends at Ron's over-enthusiasm. Besides, it was actually the day after he turned sixteen, seventeen if they couldn't get his legal guardian's signature on a consent form.

He made sure not to tell Ron that.

After dinner, he confronted Madam Hooch and got the truth about how those teams even got there in the first place, as he knew it had never happened before, and likewise she had never left him to go running up to the castle before either. She confessed she had a few friends in the sport and that the Cannons had actually just showed up uninvited, but also that she couldn't convince the Holyhead Harpies to come take a look at him, since they only recruited girls.

Harry resolved to send a letter to his old team captain, Oliver Wood, see if he couldn't come back to Hogwarts for an afternoon. And maybe bring the Puddlemere United's Seeker with him so Harry could try him out. He idly wondered, as he went to bed that night, how many Regional and National teams he could actually get to visit him so he could try them out before he'd learned everything he needed to from them. Then he wondered what exactly it was that he needed to learn from them in the first place, and finally decided it wasn't worth losing sleep over and drifted off.

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Oliver didn't disappoint. Neither did Madam Hooch after he showed what he could do on a broom. And just because he had finally figured out the one way of getting Krum to Hogwarts without sending him dirty pictures of Hermione, which to be honest he didn't have time to take in the first place if he was getting more people than just Krum to come around, he got at least one, and sometimes a few

more International League teams on board as well. All just to see a fifteen year old boy fly on a broom.

Even the very first time he managed to get them all there together, when he was as nervous and as green as his very first Quidditch match, none of them left disappointed. All of the Regional teams, plus Scotland's International team that had started showing up just after lunch time in recent days, left offers for him to join them at the start of the next season. Some of them even offered incentives.

Anything the Cannons had to offer weren't worth much, no matter what Ron said at the end of the day. Most of the teams just tended to offer season tickets, or brand new brooms, which wouldn't even be available until the middle of the next year anyway. A couple of them got creative, offering very unique incentives, the most unique was the Hollyhead Harpies offer for him to be their trainer/mascot and a very detailed description of what both positions would employ.

Turns out the Harpies really don't recruit men as Quidditch Players, but after seeing him play they apparently decided on the strategy to keep him out of their competition's hands by giving him a job that would undoubtedly be satisfactory, but not actually let him play on the team.

Just to see what would happen, he accepted their offer, as well as every other offer given, at least once every other week or so. Most teams had him sign a contract and then left, gold shining in their eyes and pretty much completely ignoring him and his requests for extra training, giving him excuses that they 'had to wait until the season began' and stuff like that. Those with the useless or uninteresting incentives handed them out and then left like all the rest. The only unique exceptions were the Harpies and the Scottish Team.

Neither team made him sign a contract, for starters. They also didn't just leave, instead giving exactly the incentives they promised, plus more than he had expected from them in the first place. The Harpies were... an experience, to say the least. They also weren't married, had intermittent boyfriends, and were privately bisexual. Their incentive to have him be their trainer/mascot turned out to be code for boytoy. If he just so happened to bring Ginny along with him after practice was over, they got spirited off to the Harpies' private stadium... and locker room. Oddly, if he ever brought along

Hermione or Luna, they just hung around till dinner and then left him with a whole lot of teasing but little follow through. He wondered if there was some reason behind that.

The Scottish International Team on the other hand, while not as... fun with their incentive as the Harpies, had a far more useful incentive. They hung around and gave Harry a "preview" of the training he would receive once he was officially on the team. When he started showing that he was good enough, the team revealed what they did when they had long practices that went after sundown, using special charms that lit up the whole Hogwarts Quidditch Pitch better than the World Cup had been. Harry felt like he was getting a whole new education from them, and the only subject was Quidditch.

Of course with all this specialized and focused attention, and with Harry so avidly learning and picking it up as quick as he could, it was only a matter of time before it happened.

One afternoon, after having brought all these Quidditch teams together at Hogwarts, Harry beat Krum to the Snitch. Not long after that, it happened that every Seeker thrown at him by all the teams invited, as well as every team they could draft into coming, he beat them too. All of them.

It was close things at first, and Harry had to struggle just to keep up and climb higher and fly faster and further. And while there was absolutely no way for the matches to be identical, because he was the variable and as good as he was he couldn't play like a robot, he was learning how all the other Seekers played the game and started becoming more familiar with their moves and skills. Eventually after some time, Harry reached a level of skill that surpassed or matched everything they had to offer. After that, it wasn't long before he considered playing against some of them like he considered facing Malfoy in Quidditch.

After that, Quidditch training started to become boring and repetitively dull. He still wanted to be the best that he possibly could be, but he had run out of people to learn from. If only there was some way to still challenge himself.

And then one morning, he forgot to get his broom from the troll, having gone through everything on autopilot for the most part and that one thing slipped his mind. So when he went to Madam Hooch

to get her to start all the teams coming around, he didn't have his broom. Ginny lent him her broom and used one of the old school brooms herself. The moment Harry was on the Cleansweep broom, he noticed all sorts of differences to both his old Nimbus and his Firebolt.

The most glaringly obvious was the speed limitations, but also the way that it handled. Not that it wasn't a perfectly fine broom, but Harry had some trouble adjusting how he used it from his Firebolt. It took him a little less than an hour to compensate, and even less time than that when he Ramped up the broom.

The next day, when he switched back to his Firebolt, remembering to get it this time, he shocked himself by being able to Ramp his Firebolt to an extra percentage point. In all the time that he'd been getting hints and training from Professional Quidditch players, he hadn't been able to get it even a tenth of a percent higher than what his maximum could allow for. And after one day on another broom, an inferior broom where he had to relearn how to fly almost, he can boost it an entire percent higher than he could've in all that time?

That very morning, he switched with Ron and repeated the process he had with Ginny's broom the day before. The Cleansweep 11 was slightly better than Ginny's but different in other ways too. Following that, every day after he used a different broom. He even stole Malfoy's Nimbus 2001 once, just to see. When he finally managed to pull the same level of performance out of each and every broom he tried, he went back to the Firebolt and was not disappointed. He managed to Ramp it a full two hundred percent beyond what he'd managed to push it too before. He once, very briefly, managed to reach Outer Space. A Bubblehead and a wandless warming charm kept him alive as he checked out a few satellites and even a Space Shuttle orbiting overhead.

On his way back to the ground, he actually broke the Sound Barrier. By the time he'd reached the castle, he'd only just managed Mach 2. At fifteen hundred miles per hour, his only means of even staying on the broom had more to do with his magic connection with it rather than any sticking charms. Also, he discovered the downside of doing that to any broom, as the moment he landed, his Firebolt shook and vibrated so badly that all of the thistles came out and it fell to the ground flat, whereas before the hovering charms had made it (before he broke it) so that unless he intentionally put it on the

ground it would stay at perfect mounting height. Of course that was about half an hour after he'd gotten off it, which made him real glad it hadn't happened while he was still on it and going at twice the speed of sound.

After that, Harry knew he had only one last challenge to face, and then he would probably be in trouble, seeing as without fresh challenges, he got very bored very quickly these days.

He remembered once thinking that he would never willingly use the School brooms for a real Quidditch match, in fact he had dreaded the very idea after his Nimbus had been destroyed in his Third Year. They were slow, very old, most of the charms put on them were starting to fail, and they maneuvered like giants in the winter time. But if he could actually get one of them to perform at Firebolt standard levels, there would be almost nothing he couldn't do on a broom!

Which could turn into a problem, he realized. He almost considered just holding back a bit more, or taking more time between Quidditch practices, but he was already doing it every other day now, and he still had fun flying, so he decided not to hold back in perfecting his skills. Besides, he figured he could always go about learning Chaser, Beater and Keeper skills if he ever truly got bored of practicing his Seeker skills.

The first time he Ramped one of the school brooms, all the charms on it suffered an immediate cascade failure. If he'd been in orbit or less than fifty feet above the ground, he probably would have reset early. As it was, he was thankfully some three hundred feet over the Quidditch Pitch and managed to have enough time and space to change into one of his many bird animagus forms and glide the rest of the way down. Same thing happened with all of the brooms.

The charms were on the verge of breaking on all of the School brooms, and since Ramping shortened that amount of time considerably, he could probably get a good five or ten minutes out of it, tops, before the charms would all fail one right after the other, the flight charms of course being the last to go. If only there was some way to prolong...

Harry stopped what he was doing before the thought had even fully formed in his head.

He raced back up to the Castle, before racing back down and grabbing Hermione and Luna and dragging them back with him, running all the way to the Library. Or to be more precise, just outside of it as they all caught their breath and he explained that he needed their help in learning how to make his own flying broomstick.

After all, once he knew the charms, he could just wandlessly reapply them to the broom and then Ramp them as much as he could get them to accept, maybe more.

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"Harry, when did you learn how to cast the spells that are cast on broomsticks?" asked Hermione, staring alongside the entire Gryffindor Quidditch Team as he (with his wand) cast a series of charms on one of the old school brooms.

"Private hobby," he gave her the short answer of one of the very few that she would actually accept. "And it took a lot longer than you may realize."

It had actually taken him more than nine months to finally master all the charms involved with making a working magic broomstick, and half that added to it in order to learn how to enchant the physical object in the first place. He only learned broomsticks, and one does not apply to all unfortunately. Silently he resolved to learn how to actually enchant objects someday. When he was feeling bored enough to do so that is.

The trouble came in that these weren't school grade charms he was dealing with, but full on mastery of the subject, 'being sold for money and guarded like gold' level charms. And that was just the ones that were nearly a thousand years old that he'd found with the help of Hermione and Madam Pince in, of all places, the Restricted Section. When he was still learning them, he had wondered how it was that as many companies for magic brooms existed in the first place, until one looked at the title of ownership for all those companies, which more often than not tended to have the same surname. Not all of the companies were owned by the same family of course, but any company that lasted for more than one season with more than one product to sell, that company tended to be made up of one very

talented enchanter, his family, and any close friends he trusted and were willing to take Unbreakable Oaths on not letting others know the specific Charm Matrix put on each product.

And there it was, the reason for why it had taken him more than a year to learn how to enchant broomsticks. You weren't just laying on one charm after the other. He was constructing a Charms Matrix, a series of spells that supported, interacted, and relied on each other in order to remain active and magical. All together, on any broom, whether the School brooms, or the latest broom on the market, you had no less than fifty and as many as five hundred individual spells cast and enchanted into it. In his learning, he had to learn each and every single individual spell, and then it took the four and a half extra months to master Matrix-casting. And that was not covered by the Room of Requirement.

"I have no doubt," Hermione agreed with his last statement. "From my preliminary research, there are roughly one hundred individual spells on your standard flying broom, on average that is. When did you have time to learn them all?"

"You'd be surprised," Harry answered her honestly, finally finishing up stripping and re-casting the last of the spells on the School broom he was holding. He'd been using his wand of course. At least for the initial casting in front of Hermione and Madam Hooch. If he did it wandlessly, which was much easier to be honest, there were uncomfortable questions that wasted more time than he wanted to spend in the first place.

Once it was finished, he brought it forth and mounted it in a single motion. A heartbeat after that, he was airborne on the re-made broom.

It was exhilarating and the biggest rush he'd had since his first time on a broom!

Though he'd never (yet) had the experience, he imagined it was much like strapping yourself to a rocket and using a rudder from a small sailboat to navigate it. The speed was off the charts, but it was heavy and turned like... well like a giant cruise ship on a river he imagined. He had about as much control over it as he did Ron's eating habits, or Malfoy's brand of insults for the day. IE, some but very little in the end.

"Harry!" Hermione called from the ground.

Turning, mostly by stopping, wrangling the broom around and then blasting off in a straight line for the ground, Harry headed back for the group on the ground and barely managed to get it stopped in time. "Uh, hey, what-what's going on?" he was surprised at himself to hear how shaken his voice was after only a few seconds on his new broom. Looking down, he saw his hands both had a white-knuckled death grip on the shaft of the broomstick.

"Harry? Are you all right?" Hermione rushed to him, but couldn't reach him as he was still a good ten feet in the air. "You looked a bit out of control up there. Are you sure this is safe?"

"Uh... ask me again in about an hour, I'll let you know," he told her, forcefully removing his hands and shaking them out a bit. "Wanted to test the speed a bit," he assured her. "It's gonna take some work."

"Why-why don't you, uh, take-take it a b-bit slow, Harry?" she suggested, the worry shining through in her voice and her eyes.

Ginny was suddenly there in the air next to him, as was Ron and the entire Gryffindor Quidditch team.

"Not to worry, Harry," the redhead grinned at him, "We'll help you work it through its paces. And Hermione and Luna are here on the ground as a safety net, just in case. What did you do to that thing that made it so fast anyway?"

"It's more like what I didn't do to it," he muttered under his breath. "Give me a few minutes guys," he said out loud, "I need to get a handle on this thing, before we try any extra exercises or team training. I'm gonna try a lap around the Pitch. Once I've got it, I'll let you know and you guys can keep pace after that."

"All right mate," Ron agreed for the team, some uncertainty present in his demeanor, but that didn't stop him from trusting Harry more than was probably wise at the time.

He started his lap, paying close attention to every nuance and bit of feedback he was getting from the broom. The speed was a bit more than he'd expected, and the response from the maneuverability

charms was way off from what he'd planned on, but thanks to his experience in flying as a bird, a variety of birds in fact, he managed to use the wind currents and even pockets of still air to make up for that. It made him look like he was drunk and had been hit in the head with a Bludger more than a few times, but he still managed to get it going to where he wanted it to. Once he'd completed his lap, he dove back to the group and actually landed the thing, skidding a bit as he'd come in a bit too hot.

Dismounting from the broom, he held it out and pulling his wand he ran a few diagnostics on it. For these types of spells, he'd discovered the hard way, using his wand was always better. Wandlessly, it would try to create the information directly in his mind, or in his magic rather. With a wand, there was a filter and he could go through the data that much quicker rather than being flooded with it non-stop.

"Harry!" Hermione hurried over, he'd skidded a bit further than he'd thought. Ginny and Luna and Ron were just behind her, everyone else behind them. "Are you all right? You really looked like you were out of control up there!"

"Yeah, I need to adjust the mana flow between the seven-dimensional axis and the lateral change fields," he said, analyzing the results of what he was seeing with what he'd just experienced. He scanned a bit more then held up his wand to read the new data before rescanning again. "Hn. And it would seem that I need to switch the relays from the forward thrust to the air foil space charms. Useful as it is using the wind and air to maneuver like that, it needs to be a smoother transition, and having the thing actually turn when I want it to would be better." He put his wand to the broom again, this time actually making the changes to the matrix.

"Blimey mate, did you see yourself up there?" Ron exclaimed. "I didn't even know any of that was even possible on a broom!"

"Harry, what were you thinking?" Hermione cried, "You could have gotten yourself killed."

"Potter!" Madam Hooch shouted, having finally caught up with all her students, "Are you completely out of your mind? Have you lost all sense of... of... of... HOW DID YOU DO ALL THAT? None of that,

none of that should have been possible! You looked like you were about to fall off, more than once!"

Harry shrugged, having finished making the modifications and was rechecking the results. Stable.

"I make it look harder than it really is," he assured them, then actually looked up and read their expressions. Holding back a gulp of nervousness, he asked, "Uh, Madam Hooch... Angelina... Ginny... did it really look that bad? I mean, I said I was still getting a feel for it, but did it look that bad?"

"Yes, it looked bad," Ginny said. "You looked like you were knocked out by a Bludger and falling into the stands half the time. Then there were the spins and tumbles that only happen to riders who've lost control completely, except it turns out you were in complete control."

"Huh, wow, looks like I need to modify the central stabilizers then," he muttered, pulling out his wand and running it over the stirrups where he placed his feet. "There! Now, who wants to race? Not to worry, I toned down the speed a little bit, so there's a fair chance for everyone."

"Harry, are you crazy?" Hermione screeched, looking like she was about to try and wrestle the broom away from him. "This thing is dangerous! You'll be thrown from it the moment you go any faster than you already had!"

"And I just fixed the problems with it, you all saw me," he grinned and chuckled, remounting the broom.

He took off before another word could be said and was rather pleased with the results. He might have to tweak the formula a bit more here and there, but he did believe he had the beginning of the Perfect Seeker's Broom. It just needed to work out the kinks and standardize the speed, and once he was certain of its stability, he then had to work in reinforcement spells so that he could actually try Ramping the thing. Until he could Ramp this to the same level he could his Firebolt, he would not consider himself finished with his training. And until he could beat all those Professional Seekers on this broom, the same as he could on his Firebolt and every other broom he's done it with, he would not consider himself the Best Seeker in the World.

Although if tomorrow were ever allowed to come, there might be some debate about that, he admitted.

Ginny and the Chasers had followed him into the air and were keeping up pretty well on the straight away. And then he came to the first turn. From his point of view, it was still a bit heavy and slower than he had been aiming for, but much improved on what he'd been doing only minutes before. From everyone else's point of view, he pulled off an impossible turn at an impossible angle without slowing down one bit, just by holding out one arm to the side and letting his Quidditch robes billow a bit more than normal.

Ginny actually tried to stick with him for more than ten minutes, but finally gave up when he started corkscrewing around the goalposts and still making it look like he was Bludger-drunk or something and practically out of control. The amazing part, they all realized, was that he was fully in control the entire time. Even Madam Hooch guessed that he was most likely going at less than a quarter of the real speed he could be putting into some of those moves. In fact, it was less than ten percent.

For the first time since he first learned Ramping, Harry felt that he had finally come across a broom that was too much for him. Before it had just been learning the skills and training himself up to handle using those skills, but all on brooms that he could handle just as well as any. Now... he was actually afraid of what might happen if he were to go all out on a broom like this.

He held off on finding out, and just spent the rest of the day horsing around on his new toy, and also working out the last of the kinks in it. Once he was sure he could replicate it from memory precisely, he'd start working on reinforcement spells.

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"Harry, when did you learn how to cast the spells that are cast on broomsticks?" asked Hermione, staring alongside the entire Gryffindor Quidditch Team as he cast a series of charms on one of the old school brooms.

"Private hobby," he gave her the short answer of one of the very few that she would actually accept. "And it took a lot longer than you may realize."

"I have no doubt," Hermione agreed with his last statement. "From my preliminary research, there are roughly one hundred individual spells on your standard flying broom, on average that is. When did you have time to learn them all?"

"Just because I don't study and want to learn absolutely everything, Hermione, does not mean I don't want to learn some things," he answered her. "From my first moment on a broom, I've wanted to learn everything I could about the subject. And the reason I never told anyone about it, is so I could avoid you taking over and telling me exactly what to study and what to do with it... and to avoid the same ridicule Ron was giving you before we all became friends."

"Oh," Hermione blinked, surprised at the logical argument from her friend. "So, you've been working on this for a while then?"

"Longer than you would imagine," he answered honestly.

"What is it you are doing to that broom exactly?" she questioned, taking a closer look as he ran his wand up and down the length of the magical device.

"Right now? Double-checking my work," he told her. "I've added reinforcement spells, to keep the Charms Matrix stable and more durable. So that way, if nothing bad or unfortunate ever happens to this broom, it would continue to function for more than a thousand years before starting to break down. And, with the way I fly, so it will at least last for the rest of the day. You know, I always used to wonder why it was wizards used such billowy robes, even more so on flying broomsticks in games like Quidditch. Turns out there's a good reason after all."

"Harry..." Hermione started to ask in a quiet voice, a sneaking suspicion that there was more to this than what she was seeing, but he finished before she could say anything further.

"There, that should do it," he pronounced, and then mounted the broom and was off before anybody could say a word. It looked like he lost control of it the moment he left the ground, but then he

started flitting in and out between the beams of the stadium and was moving at a speed that boggled the mind and turned him into a red blur in the air.

"OK, everything is stable, let's get to practicing!" Harry pronounced after a few laps around the Pitch.

Amazed at what they were seeing, the Gryffindor Quidditch team quickly mounted their brooms and were off to join Harry in the air. Once Angelina saw that he truly was in control the entire time, she set them about to practicing and more or less picking up where they left off at their last practice.

At first, Harry was flitting about here and there, but after Angelina told him to stop it and to fly straight, he started managing to get it so he was flying like everyone else was. It was surprisingly a struggle to not just go with the flow and let the winds knock him about, giving him an unmatched edge in maneuverability and speed, but the challenge was what made it worth it, Harry realized. In making this bucking bronco of a broom fly like a purebred show horse, it became a unique challenge, as he had to use the winds and shape of the air to make it fly in a straight line and take corners and turns and even corkscrews like normal.

After their practice, which ended right around lunchtime, Harry went and retrieved his Firebolt and tried his new level of skills on it. He was not disappointed in the slightest. Normally, thanks to the unique charms in place on it, a rider can safely ignore the wind and shape of the air, flying the broom wherever he wants despite any and all wind resistance. As Harry had discovered through making his own Seeker broom, that was not entirely the case. Obviously the Firebolt's charms couldn't negate the wind, or make the air still all around it. No, but what it did do was create a magical air foil around the broom and the rider, that automatically shaped itself so that the broom would fly in whatever direction the rider wanted to go in.

Harry had done his best in constructing his own variations of a magical air foil on his broom, but the best he could do was lessen the air resistance and make it smoother in flying through the air. It wasn't the fully adaptive masterpiece that you'd find on any professional broomstick, but it boosted his speed from less than a hundred mph to well over it. The point was, however, that while the Firebolt was good and its air foil allowed its rider to go in just about

any direction they desired, there was still some wind and air pockets that got through and could influence the rider.

Using his cloak and experience of how to navigate the winds, he discovered that he could actually pull off the same stunts on his Firebolt that he could on his homemade broom. Some of them even better in fact!

It still made him look like he was either flying drunk, or had been hit a few too many times by a Bludger, but that was sort of the point. Recalling an old movie that Dudley had watched all the time, until he figured out that learning martial arts would require actual exercise, Harry laughed himself silly as he sat for the OWL that afternoon. The movie was about a martial artist that had learned and perfected a unique style of kung fu, called Drunken Fist. It involved punches, rolls, kicks, and just general moves that made the fighter look like they were drunk most of the time, when actually they were just moving in a way that let them pull off moves that nobody they were fighting ever saw coming.

The reason for Harry's laughter, even to the point where he was turning his test in after only fifteen minutes, was that he'd realized he'd just invented a new way of flying on a broomstick; Drunken Flying!

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After he'd more or less perfected his Seeker's Broom, he started working at controlling it, mastering it where before it had mastered him. It wasn't until he had perfected flying 'normal' on it that he could approach Madam Hooch for lessons once more. After that, it was less than a week, from his point of view, before she was calling all those recruiters and teams to come to Hogwarts to try him out. The day after that, he started calling Wood and doing whatever it took to get Krum to come out to Hogwarts at the same time, until he had half the Regional League and at least three International Teams there, testing him out as a Seeker.

Drunken Flying was an art in and of itself, and Harry was it's progenitor. Testing it out against one Professional Seeker after the other, sometimes on his Firebolt, sometimes on his Seeker Broom, he truly perfected that art as no other could. Of course once he had,

he could beat absolutely anyone on a broom or in the air, period. Didn't matter who they were or how good they were, his Drunken Flying could beat them no matter who they were.

Normal flying, on the other hand, well he was still learning some things. He could beat Krum now, without Drunken Flying that is, but only about every other time they faced each other. Harry could usually surprise him and slipped by him the first time, which prompted Krum to challenging him to a rematch, where Krum would absolutely trash him, only for Harry to win the next time after that, when Krum wasn't surprised by what he could do on a broom.

Of course Krum wasn't the only Seeker there that day, and for that matter, neither was he the best Harry had to face. There were a lot of great players out there, except for the Canons of course, and the Harpies usually showed up about the same time Krum's team did. One by one, Harry faced and challenged himself against the Seekers of the world, and one by one, after facing them repeatedly for months, day after day, he beat them.

Roughly seven months, give or take a couple weeks, after he'd perfected his Seeker Broom, Harry found himself able to best every Seeker coming to Hogwarts that afternoon. Even Krum. And not just beat once and move on, but repeatedly defeat them in the Seeker's Challenge he issued, which was basically them versus him, where they were all on one team and if any of them caught the Snitch, they all won, but if he did, they all lost. It was interesting to see all those players from opposing teams work together like that, but the challenge was worth it, as he developed his skill faster than ever during those challenges.

He even, once, (never to be repeated during a single loop) released a dozen or more Snitches, and if any of their team caught even one of those many Snitches, he lost and they won. But if he caught all of them...

He was catching all of them after the third time he did such a challenge.

It finally got to the point where, by the end of the day, Harry Potter was humiliating half of the Professional Seekers in Britain, and guaranteeing himself a job for life the day he graduated Hogwarts. Not that it would do him much good still being stuck in this time loop,

but the point was, Harry could now count himself as being the Best Seeker in the World. If he had the means, he probably would have tried to issue a challenge under that name, maybe drawing in a few more International Teams, but nothing could be done in a single day for something of that scale. Nothing that he could do at any rate.

Still, the question remained, now that he was the Best Seeker in the World... now what?

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Harry took a break from Quidditch for a short while. Refocused on his magic training, even went on a few dates that ended up back in the Room of Requirement. He started to get restless again though. So, he went back out to the Quidditch Pitch and just had a standard practice with the team, holding himself back, and using his Firebolt instead of his Seeker Broom.

During the practice, he watched the Chasers and Ginny flying about. He could easily afford to keep both eyes on them as he'd finally mastered what Ron had been talking about with his flinch. He casually flew around obstacles in his path and knew where the Snitch was in relation to him at all times. As well as everyone else in the air around him.

Watching the Chasers however, aside from the benefit of staring at pretty girls that is, he saw something interesting. They flew in uniform perfect straight lines, always moving in concert with one another, and were pulling off moves that were on par with anything that he could do. Just... slower.

Ginny was keeping pace with them at the moment, although she was currently the team's Seeker in his absence, he could see that she wanted to be, and was meant to be a Chaser. Just as Ron was meant to be a Keeper, the Twins Beaters, and supposedly Charlie had also been Seeker in his day, while Bill was a Chaser on the team, though never Team Captain as Charlie had been. Idly, Harry wondered if it was Arthur or Molly who was the Quidditch fan that wanted to 'make their own team'.

Watching the Chaser drills for the rest of practice, he wondered how much of a difference there was, in skill set, between being a Seeker

and a Chaser. He was curious to know if he could learn it, and just how difficult it would be. Then he recalled his first lesson in Quidditch with Oliver Wood all those years ago. He'd bashed a Bludger the moment it was out of the box, and Wood's words to him came back, "Not bad, Potter. You'd make a decent Beater."

Harry grinned and caught the Snitch just as Angelina called the practice to a halt. He would give it a reset or two, so he could research on his own the differences, but the next practice they had, Harry would be learning how to be a Chaser.

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"You want to what, Potter?" Angelina cried out.

He sighed and resisted rolling his eyes as best he could. No matter how he phrased the question, she always reacted the same way whenever he made his proposal to her. He repeated it anyway, "I would like it if you and the girls could show me how to be a Chaser. And before you panic, I'm not about to change positions on the team or anything! I was... I was talking with Ron the other day," better than Hermione, as far as Angelina was concerned and he couldn't say Ginny because they actually talked about these sort of things apparently, "And we both came up with the idea that maybe I could do more to help out with the team. On the field, I mean. But in order to do anything, I need to better understand what is involved with the other positions. So, Ron will agree to show me how a Keeper sees things and all, but I thought it might be better to start off learning from the Chasers."

He put on his best 'earnest and innocent' look, and mentally crossed his fingers.

Angelina glared at her trouble-player for what felt like the longest time, but ultimately, she sighed and rolled her own eyes. "Fine. Meet us in the Common Room and we'll talk about it."

"I've got my broom," Harry told her.

"Common Room. Five minutes," Angelina snapped at him, and then went to collect the other Chasers. Ginny tagged along, as did Hermione and Ron when they saw what was up.

Except for a very brief interruption for the OWL exam, (Hermione literally dragged him away, but he was back within ten minutes), Harry learned everything that the Gryffindor Chasers knew about Quidditch. Well, not all at once of course. It was over the course of several resets, but all they did for the whole day was sit in the Common Room with Wood's old Quidditch field model and talked about everything that a Chaser did. Harry asked questions and all manner of subjects and insights he'd never guessed at were brought home for him.

They finally went to bed some time after midnight, Harry's brain still twirling with everything that he'd learned just from one day. The next, he asked different questions and still went to bed with his head full. He was also trying to think of a way to get the girls to actually show him how to do it when he'd heard all the answers and they would start to repeat themselves.

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The theoretical Chaser training sessions lasted a good long while, but eventually it got to the point where Harry had little more to learn that he didn't already know. And so he set about convincing the girls to give him a field tryout as it were. Turns out, that was harder than expected.

Angelina did not want to change the line-up of the team. Did not want to even discuss the possibility of it in fact. Therefore, she saw no point in helping Harry practice being a Chaser. Talking about it was one thing, apparently, actually practicing and showing him how to do it on the other hand...

Harry tried everything he could think of, short of seducing her that is. Everything that a friend or teammate would do at the least. He was surprised by how against it she was.

So, after trying everything he could think of, and a few variations off of, he finally decided to just go around Angelina's head, and went to the Chasers themselves. Specifically, Ginny and Katie Bell. Alicia Spinnet was best friends with Angelina, and he didn't really want to (even temporarily) drive a wedge between them. With Ron on board, he had enough people to start putting into practice everything that

he'd been learning about with the theoretical discussions with the Chasers for weeks now.

The transition was not as difficult as Harry had feared that it might be. The only difference was the ball he had to keep an eye out for was the Quaffle, rather than the Snitch, and it was a lot easier to do for that fact. Harry had no trouble at all with the teamwork portion of it, and in fact seemed to enjoy that more than anything else. Although, as the practices got longer, he did start to notice that the others couldn't keep up with him and he found himself waiting for them to get into position.

After a few practices where he started to feel genuine frustration, and he was doing as well as the Chaser girls themselves, he started going back to Madam Hooch, only this time for lessons in being a good Chaser rather than a Seeker. She walked him through the drills, quite a few different ones from those for a Seeker, and at least a few required one or more other fliers. Thankfully, Ginny and Ron were always on hand, and after a number of practices with Madam Hooch where he was really impressing people, the Gryffindor Chasers showed up and really started putting Harry through his paces.

But again, after only a few practices, maybe two weeks worth, Harry found himself moving faster and having to just sit and wait for the other Chasers to catch up with him and to get in place before they could finish the play. This became highly frustrating when Madam Hooch was yelling at him more than the other Chasers, saying that he needed to match his pace to the team's, not the other way around.

That there was the biggest difference between being a Seeker and being a Chaser. Being a Seeker, he had to move as fast as he possibly could, and be moving before others were and keeping an eye only for the Snitch, while being distracted by the other plays occasionally. Being a Chaser, on the other hand, it was all about moving in time and in synchronicity with the other players on the team, and keeping an eye on not just the Quaffle, but everything else in the air at the same time.

It took him more than a week to actually start listening and doing what they were all telling him from the start, and stop racing ahead, instead keeping his pace in time with the others in the air with him. It

was enough of an issue that Harry actually went back to just asking the Chasers questions in the Common Room. One of his most persistent, which they tended to either gloss over or deny answering outright, was how they became so good at their teamwork. Finally, they relented and told him that their first couple seasons on the team, one of which was the season he joined the team, they were actually the worst sort of team imaginable, barely able to throw the ball to one another without it being stolen by the other team.

Charlie, the Team Captain when they became the Chasers for the Gryffindor team, had them doing teamwork exercises the whole practice, every practice. Oliver kept up the work, and Harry vaguely recalled those exercises he'd seen the Chasers going through. Of course, at the time, he'd been more preoccupied with his own training regimen.

Harry talked to them until he was sure he had every exercise they did and knew them as well as the girls did. The next after that, he was back to sneaking around Angelina and Alicia, and working with Madam Hooch occasionally, this time though he was working on those team exercises with Ron, Ginny, Katie, and when with Madam Hooch, the rest of the team.

And, it started to make a difference.

Each player, he discovered through these exercises, had their own rhythm, their own way of flying and moving and looking at things. The key to the teamwork, from his perspective, was to match his own rhythm to theirs and in return have them match theirs to his. Interestingly enough, once he actually started working together with the team, rather than 'working them', he discovered how much better he could be.

It wasn't as clear-cut as being a Seeker was, where being faster and more observant were the key, but there were levels to being a Chaser. Amateur level, which all the school teams were, Regional level, National level, and International level. Ramping didn't come into play for Chasers until the National level surprisingly.

At each level, it became more about how well the player that fit with the other players you put them with. The difference between School and Regional was the moves the teams could pull off. Some teams, their teamwork was so finely tuned that they could pull off feats that

even Professional level Seekers and Broom Racers would stare and gawk at. But at the National and International levels, it went back to the individual player. Some teams couldn't work without the whole team, and to put a new player in or to take a good player out, the whole teamwork dynamic would fall apart.

At the National and International levels however, every player chosen for those teams could work just as easily and just as well with the teams they were on, as the teams they played against, and even teams at different levels! You take one player from one team and replace him with another, and the team still plays the same together, just maybe with one piece that makes it that much more that it had been before.

That is what Harry had to shoot for. Which meant working with more than just the Gryffindor Chasers, or other players or people he could talk into practicing with him. It meant getting the other teams on board and playing with them.

Harry decided to start off small and easy, and with the one team he had an actual 'in' to; the Ravensclaws.

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"Cho, I need a favor," Harry whispered to the whimpering pile of female flesh on her knees before him. Hey, just because he'd moved on didn't mean he couldn't still remember how to push all of his Ex's pleasure buttons. Particularly when he started the conversation with a soul-searing kiss that left her weak in the knees, away from prying eyes. Cho was very socially conscientious after all.

"Anything, Harry, anything..." she whimpered as he slowly massaged a couple points on her shoulders.

"I need you to get the Ravenclaw Quidditch team together and convince them to help me learn how to be a Chaser," he whispered while moving on to another of her pleasure points.

"Sure, whatever you... wait, what?" she mostly snapped out of the haze he'd put her in as her mind processed his request.

"I'm learning how to be a Chaser. To be a better one, you have to be able to adapt to any team you're put with. I need experience with additional teams," he explained.

"But..." she started to say something, but his hands never stopped what they were doing and she changed her mind all of a sudden, "... but what's in it for me?"

"Well, since we can only play on the Pitch until nightfall... I'll give you a night that you will never, ever forget. Consequence free. And, I'll owe you one. A favor from Harry Potter. How much would that be worth, I wonder?"

"Will you... keep doing what you're doing... tonight?" she gasped.

"Cho, you help me with everything that I'll need to learn how to be a Chaser today, and I'll be your bloody slave for the whole night if that is your desire," he answered straight-forward.

"Give me fifteen minutes to get everyone," she was up and gone in a flash. Twenty minutes later, Harry was on the Quidditch Pitch with the Ravenclaw Quidditch team, and they all wanted one favor from him. He readily agreed, just so long as payments on those favors weren't due until "tomorrow". They had no trouble agreeing to that and thus began his renewed humiliation with the Ravenclaws. He'd forgotten how much they loved to lord over how much more they knew than everyone around them.

By sundown, Harry had gotten a feel for the Ravenclaw Chasers, and was beginning to feel comfortable with them. They, however, were not so at ease with him and they had trouble adjusting to his presence. After sundown, Cho dragged Harry to her dorm room and locked the door behind her. She then, unknowingly, reenacted the first night either of them had made love to one another. Minus the strip poker foreplay that is.

Harry briefly wondered if he was cheating on his other love interests by doing this, but when Luna knocked on the door and poked her head in, somehow undoing Cho's locks on the door, and casually informed him that it was her turn tomorrow night and that Hermione would be the night after that and then Ginny, well he lost all worries at that point and proceeded to fulfill his promise to his Ex, in spite of her protests and exclamations that he was a brute and a cold-

hearted bastard, and he had her screaming his name with synonyms to lover, sex-god, and most potent son of a bitch in the world five minutes after.

The next reset where he was Quidditch training, he started looking into ways of playing with the Hufflepuff team. Unfortunately, the only Hufflepuff Quidditch player he'd been on speaking terms with had been Cedric, and those Hufflepuffs he knew from the DA, only one or two of them were on the team, and he could not say he knew them well enough to ask this kind of favor.

Still, you never know until you try...

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All Harry had to do was walk straight up to the Hufflepuff Team Captain during breakfast and tell him that he wanted to learn how to be a Chaser and ask for help. It took him fifteen resets to figure that out.

It was worth it in the end however, as Harry got the experience he wanted, working with and alternating what teams he played with. He began to improve by leaps and bounds, to the point where Madam Hooch was showing him a few moves that she wouldn't or couldn't before. It was enough of an improvement that it made Harry start to wonder why not go to the Slytherins as well. Well, aside from the obvious.

However, he realized, those obvious reasons to not do it were all the more reason to do it in the first place! Harry needed to be able to work with anyone and everyone on the field, no questions asked, if he wanted to be a Professional Level Chaser that is. And sometimes, quite often it seemed, that meant being traded to the rival team and working with players that you would typically hate the guts of. And that certainly applied for Harry and the Slytherin team.

His 'in' with them was actually even easier to negotiate than the Ravensclaws. He went to Malfoy, blackmailed him, and "intrigued" the Sexy Sexy Witches, and with those three in his corner, as it were, he got one afternoon of Chaser practice with the Slytherin Quidditch team.

Of course they tried to ram him into the ground or the stadium multiple times, but he got them focused enough on practice that he actually made them look competent when compared to how they normally played. Didn't hurt that he could already out fly any one of them, but the key was to fly with teamwork, and in spite of all the animosity and outright hate thrown at him from them, he figured out how to make it work. Without threatening them and Malfoy every few minutes too.

Once he'd reached what he judged to be Pro level Chaser skills, he went back to Madam Hooch and asked her for advice. She had him demonstrate what he could do, and he even got the Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw teams to come out with the Gryffindor team so he could do just that. An hour later, those same first time recruiters that she called, or that showed up on their own, arrived at Hogwarts and Harry was placed with some of their Chasers and put through his paces.

It was harder than anything he'd done on a broom to date, and that included mastering his Seeker Broom. But it was worth it in the end! Harry could even make the Cannon Chasers look good!

Of course in that case, it was more that they conformed to his presence, letting him take the lead in everything, rather than him fitting in and matching their rhythm and they matching his. And since he could already Ramp his broom to Pro level speeds, he had no trouble keeping up with all the other teams' moves and a couple of them even showed him some of the more basic air tricks that Chaser's could pull off that were also Pro-level in and of themselves.

He had perfected such basic maneuvers and could fulfill any role in the Hawkshead Formation, Parkin's Pincer, and the Porskoff Ploy, and could pull off the Reverse Pass, or any kind of pass really, with just about anyone. Usually by aiming for a part of their body where they would catch it instinctively and couldn't not catch it. His Woolongong Shimmy was so effective that it was practically a whole new, more advanced move.

Nobody would show him any of their Team Specialty moves, but he didn't expect them to.

After he started making calls on his own and all the other teams that showed up for his Seeker challenges from before now showing up

for Chaser challenges, he really started working it to see if there was any team that he couldn't work with. In the process, as with his Seeker skills, he started making up some moves for himself, things that he could pull off that no one else in the world could.

One, he called it the Potter Bolt, and it was very similar to the Woolongong Shimmy, but instead of throwing off opposing Chasers, it was a means of putting him in position to intercept the Quaffle amidst the other team's passing. From an outsider's view, it looked like he just appeared and then disappeared from where he intercepted the Quaffle.

The other, which was probably the only original move that he came up with in all of this, not based on any of the other maneuvers he'd learned, he called it the Potter Clap. As in thunderclap. And it was the next level up from the Bolt. Harry, in possession of the Quaffle, became a one man Chaser Team, passing it to open empty air, and then moving so fast that no other players saw him move, and catching the thrown Quaffle before anybody else could intercept it from him. He actually, in front of the Holyhead Harpies even, pulled this off and managed to score off them. Three times. Once in each hoop.

They didn't offer him the benefits package that particular reset, but it was still worth it.

Still, he realized that wasn't the point of being a Chaser, so he redoubled his efforts to increase his skill so he could match with just about any team in the world, no matter who was on it. He didn't slow down until every single team, including the Harpies, was telling him that if he wanted to, they would all hire him for the very next season. In fact, they all said that he wouldn't even have to try out, just sign the contract and show up for practices. The practices, Harry realized, was where they would turn him from being a rather raw Chaser, into whatever that particular team needed him to be.

Not wanting to limit, or as they called it 'focus' his skills, he decided that he'd gotten about as far in learning how to be a Chaser as he could realistically get while still stuck in this time loop. Which just left two positions still to master. Well, that, or he could just stop practicing Quidditch all together.

. . . Nah!

Besides, it was something to do, and also something that he still enjoyed. He'd keep at it for a while, but it was time to move on from both Seeker and Chaser. But which next? Beater, or Keeper?

Ron was the team's current Keeper, and if Harry suddenly started getting better than Ron, after asking him for help... Yeah, he wanted to put that off for as long as possible. Beater it is. Good thing too, as it was the only other position that he'd shown talent in when he first started. Well, according to Wood and both the Twins.

Now the questions became, how to start learning how to be a Beater?

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Turns out that it was an easier to answer question than he thought it was going to be. The answer; the same place as where he learned how to prank, Weasley's Wizarding Wheezes.

"Let's get this straight," Fred said.

"You want us—" George said.

"—to teach you—" Fred continued.

"—how to be a Quidditch Beater?" George finished the question.

"Yes. I'm already a Master Seeker, and I can play with just about any team you can name as a Chaser. And I think I proved with my morning wake-up prank my story about being stuck in a time loop, right? Now I want to learn how to be a Beater. Show me what I need to do, and then I'll go to Madam Hooch for the rest of it," Harry said.

The Weasley Twins exchanged a look or two, and then finally shook his hands and shouted, "Deal!"

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What followed was a hundred times worse than their prank-training. They had him, first of all, spend whole resets just swinging the

Beater bat. It might not have been so bad if it had been just that, swinging the bat. No, he had to swing the bat a certain way, and if either one of them noticed anything even the slightest bit off in his execution, then they were lecturing him for hours about the proper way to do it and wouldn't leave him alone about it until they were satisfied.

It was close to five hundred resets before they finally announced that he'd mastered the *basic* swing! Although they did keep commenting that his arm strength wasn't sufficient enough to slam a Bludger with the proper amount of strength.

It wasn't until Harry skipped on his lesson with the Twins to do some actual flying with a live Bludger that he finally saw what they were talking about. The 'basic swing' they'd taken over a proverbial year and a half to teach him allowed for pinpoint accuracy as well as a way to maximize the strength behind his blows without injuring himself. He tried it a couple other ways, just swinging however he felt like. He'd pulled a muscle halfway through his second such swing, and the vibration of the hit rattled his bones all the way to the soles of his feet.

Harry decided to do exactly what the Twins told him to do from now on when it came to being a Beater.

Once he showed them that he had the basic swing mastered, they started talking nonsense to him. Mostly it was riddles, the first half told by one and finished by another. It took him twenty resets before they started repeating themselves and he was sure he'd heard and learned all the limericks, rhymes, poems, and riddles they could throw at him. After that, he went back to the Quidditch Pitch and released the Bludgers, keeping a bat handy, just in case.

Every single last one of those little saying they told him and had him memorize? It was a way to aim, and basic tactics on how to use Bludgers during a game. With those saying in mind, Harry could knock the wings off the Snitch with a Bludger. He really could in fact, and did a couple of times just to prove it.

Once Harry had shown them his perfected basic swing and recited every single one of their sayings back to him in the first ten minutes (they were still being tied to their chairs after he woke them up, it was the only way to get them to listen), they moved on to the next

set of swings for him to learn; the left-right cross, the right-left tap, the down slash, and the uppercut.

Working on it from the moment he woke up to well after midnight most resets, it still took him over 730 resets before the Twins had nothing to complain about his swings or his form, and thankfully his basic swing was still spot-on. As much as Harry had expected trouble in learning the other spots of Quidditch, he honestly hadn't expected it to take him nearly four years just to learn the basics behind being a Beater!

Bloody hell! It had only taken him a little over a full year of resets to be a Professional Level Chaser! Why was he having so much trouble, he wondered then, to be a Professional Level Beater?

He was grateful, at least that he kept up his other training and had other things to do in between Quidditch training days. If he didn't vary his schedule even a little, he worried that he truly would go mad, and sooner rather than later.

After showing the Twins he'd mastered their basics (he highly doubted the other teams or even the Professional Teams had their Beaters go through the same process) they told him that the next thing required they be on brooms and a Quidditch Pitch. So, the next reset, the Twins woke up tied to chairs in the Hogwarts Locker Room. It wasn't easy getting them from Diagon Alley in London and back to Hogwarts without waking up in the interim, but with skills that he'd picked up and practiced on his non-Quidditch Training days it was manageable.

He calmly explained to them what was happening, proved his current level of skill to them, and then calmly asked for their help... while holding a fireball between his hands. They showed him the rest of the basics that very reset. It took him three or four resets to figure out how to get the Twins there without subtly threatening them or running off part way through, but it was another 700 resets before they honestly, with no joking or fearing for their lives and his sanity, told him that he was as good as they were on a broom with a Beater bat in hand. The only thing left for him to do, they said, was to develop his own style. They had shown him the basics, it was all up to him now to see what he did with it.

And so he spent another dozen or so resets combining his other original moves for the other positions, with his new found skill as a Beater, and came up with at least a dozen new moves to add to his growing repertoire. Unfortunately, and he found this out the hard way more than once, Madam Hooch didn't really care for that particular position in Quidditch, and no matter how good he showed himself to be as a Beater, she would never call those friends of her.

So, he showed her his Seeker and Chaser skills, made a few calls himself, and then in the first few minutes of showing them his Seeker and Chaser skills, picked up a Beater bat and at a timed cue, had Ron release the Bludgers and showed off the best of his new Beater moves. He called it Potter's Pong, because all it really was, was hitting the Bludger to where he was flying to next, but at Ramped speed, and then hit it again to where he was going to be until it looked like he was just hitting it back and forth between himself.

It caught the attention of some of the Pros that had come along with the Teams and after learning their different cues and the right 'innocent' questions to ask and to answer, he had all the Professional Beaters showing him some of their own tricks and ways to be a better Beater. If it wasn't for the fact that he learned something new every time, he might have moved on already. But no, every single thing they showed him that he could do with a bat and a Bludger, both legal and illegal (thanks to stricter regulations from the Ministry), he found a hundred or more different things to do on his own to make him that much better!

From the day he'd first walked into the Twin's shop to have them teach him how to be a Beater, it had been more than ten proverbial years, rapidly approaching six. A little more than a year learning how to be a Chaser and being regarded as Professional Level by all the Professional Teams. And a proverbial three years mastering his Seeker skills, with another half a year thrown in for coming up with and making his Seeker Broom. That's nearly a couple decades, by his count. And that's not counting the years before he went to the table and asked for an idea and Ron mentioned becoming a Quidditch star.

Idly, Harry wondered if he should design different brooms for the different positions. Being a Seeker, you needed speed and agility, but mostly speed. Being a Chaser, on the other hand, it's more

about agility than speed, and in fact having too much speed can be a detriment, as again he found out the hard way. Likewise, he'd discovered, being a Beater required an entirely different skill set on a broom. Speed was beneficial, but not necessary. Braking and hovering charms were vital however, maybe some way to give the rider a solid footing as it were, to give better leverage for hitting the Bludgers?

Well, that would be something to consider for later.

He went to the Gryffindor team and approached his 'contacts' in the other House Teams. One after the other, he organized unofficial Quidditch games, with him as the Gryffindor Beater, and Ginny as the Seeker. After beating, almost literally, all the teams, he determined that his Beater skills were as Professional Level as they were going to get. He still found himself discovering whole new moves or new ways to do old ones, some that worked better, others that were just as much a surprise to him as those he unleashed them on.

Considering who his teachers were, he wasn't surprised to find his own development as a Beater to be rather... chaotic. He was still evolving as a Quidditch player it seemed. But with no new or fresh opponents, and with Beaters not being as recognized for their skill as Seekers, Chasers, or even Keepers, he had long since run out of ways to test himself and to keep himself interested.

Therefore, Harry came to the decision that it was time he moved on yet again. Fortunately, there was only one other position in Quidditch he hadn't yet mastered, so he wouldn't have to look long or hard for what to do next. Doubly fortunate, he happened to be best friends with Gryffindor's current star Keeper, and had the address (and Apparition location) of the previous star Keeper, both of which are at the bare minimum of Professional Level Keepers as it is.

It wasn't even that hard to set up really.

He went to Ron, with his broom, and offered to play around on the Quidditch Pitch before the OWL that afternoon. Once out there, it was relative ease to work the conversation around to where Ron was showing him some moves and talking about being a Keeper.

The trick became getting him to shut up about it before Hermione drug them off to take the OWL test!

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"So what you really want to do here is make sure the Quaffle does not go in the hoops, right?" Ron said breathlessly, obviously very excited over what he was telling his friend.

"Ron," Harry said.

"Right, so the catch to it is you have to put yourself between the Chasers and the hoop. Sound's easy, right?" Ron said, getting more breathless with each word.

"Ron," Harry tried again, some frustration bleeding through.

"Right, but it's not, cause you see you have to try and anticipate which of the three hoops they're going to shoot for..."

"Ron," Harry sighed, rolling his eyes, but Ron didn't even notice as his face was starting to turn red.

"...or they may even try to pass it to someone else in the air, and then you have to..."

"Ron!" Harry snapped, having lost patience. It was the fifteenth time he'd been through this conversation already, and to be quite honest they did not have the time it took for Ron to wind down on his own.

"Sorry, did you have something you wanted to ask, Harry?" Ron, bright-eyed, flushed, and breathing heavy, asked.

"Just... please correct me if I'm flying wrong. I don't have a lot of time today, and I swear, the minute the sun goes down, you can tell me all about how you do things and how I should be doing things. But for right now, I need to practice, and I need your help for that. Your help does not, yet, include explaining to me, in detail, how you do things. Now," Harry paused and took a moment to gauge his friend's reaction. Sometimes it happened that he said the wrong thing at the wrong time or in the wrong tone that set the Weasley temper off in a big way and Harry was left practicing on his own. It was much better

when he got Ron to be serious and to genuinely help him out without losing his cool.

"Now," he continued after seeing Ron was indeed serious about things and keeping his cool, "when you are patrolling the posts, do you do the Double Eight Loop all the time, or do wait until the Quaffle is in range? And how do you hold the broom when you are blocking? I can see how you're holding it now, but when you're actively patrolling, and especially when you're blocking, I notice that your grip changes subtly. Care to share?"

"Sure Harry," Ron nodded and proceeded to answer all of Harry's questions. After which, Ron ran a couple of Quaffles at the hoops with Harry as the Keeper. Surprisingly, Ron managed to sink three out of five shots, with the two that Harry blocked having done so by accident, after which Ron even caught it and managed a rebound each time.

"OK, this is definitely harder than I thought," Harry mumbled, having already known that after fifteen Keeper practices already, but he'd expected to see some improvement by now!

"Yeah, see, I told you, now..." Ron started to repeat himself, but thankfully Hermione arrived to drag them to the OWL exam at that moment. Harry decided to try Oliver for a while.

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"How did he do it? How, Rolanda?" Aidan Lynch of the Ireland National team asked the school instructor.

"I... couldn't begin to tell you, Aidan," Madam Hooch told her old friend.

They were both stunned at the display they had just witnessed, and they were not the only ones. Practically every major Regional, National, and International team that mattered in the Wizarding sport of Quidditch had just seen a fifteen year old boy, not even finished taking his OWLs, challenge and then utterly defeat and humiliate every single Professional Quidditch Player, again that mattered, in the world. He had even beat the best of the best. Even the best of the best of the best!

He'd beaten Krum at several Seeker challenges, Krum who was the Seeker that had caught the Snitch in the last World Cup! He'd beaten the Irish, the Bulgarians, the Japanese and the Americans in Chaser challenges, and they were the teams that played in the last two World Cups! He'd then done it again in a Keeper challenge against the same teams! Nothing could get past him!

And then he did the impossible, and he had the best of the best, Krum as Seeker, the best, fastest and greatest Chasers of the world, as well as the strongest Beaters known to the game, all the best that the best had to offer. He then took the humiliation a step further and allowed there to be three Keepers, one for each post. He then played against them. Just him, by himself, a one-man team. One fifteen year old boy against nine experienced, Professional Quidditch Players, all the best at what they did.

And he beat them.

And then he did it again after sunset, just to prove it hadn't been a fluke and that he hadn't been cheating. All on a regulation Firebolt, the same broom the rest of them were on, just to rub it in.

Nobody could explain it. Bloody hell! Hardly anybody could accept it let alone explain it! Didn't change the facts of the matter though. Harry Potter had just destroyed the lives and careers of over a hundred Professional Quidditch Players, and in the process proven himself to be a Quidditch god!

Harry did one final lazy loop of the Quidditch Pitch, at subsonic speeds, watching how everybody was just staring at him, or leaving after some angry snits. None of them were approaching him with any deals, not even the Harpies. After mastering the Keeper position, Harry had spent the remainder of the last proverbial century, roughly some twenty-five to thirty proverbial years, looking for bigger and better challenges, something to do to better himself, make him the best. It would seem, he observed, that his latest challenge had truly made him the absolute best.

Although, he was willing to admit, playing as a one-man Quidditch Team was probably going a bit too far. And, now that he had proven, both to himself and the whole world practically, that he could actually do it, there was nothing else he could do. Not unless he wanted to

switch from Quidditch entirely and go into racing, or something else like that.

Harry stopped his lazy flight, hovering silently over the Hogwarts Quidditch Pitch, thinking deep thoughts. He was going to take a break from Quidditch for a while. Maybe go back to the table in the morning and ask Hermione what she would do in a time loop.

After all, it's not like he needed his broom to get around anymore, having mastered Apparition and was even now working on creating permanent portals, and one day even a portable portal.

AN: Well, some good news, some bad news, and some just plain news. Good news, I've been writing a lot on this story so I am about three to four chapters ahead of schedule at the moment. The bad news... my editors are not responding to the chapters I've sent them to edit, which normally would delay things and most likely will for the following chapters as that means I have to do any and all editing myself, which delays things even further. Therefore, the plain news is that this chapter has been posted pre-edited, so I apologize for any typos or bits where it may not make much sense. Did the best that I could.

Anyway, I also need your help. I've tried this before, the results were... sporadic, but this time I'm keeping my expectations small. :)

The time has finally come for Harry to start 'winning' a little. Ergo, to keep things as diverse as possible, I would like to hear what everyone would like to see Harry do to kill Voldemort. Think of it as a 'Kill Kenny' poll, but for Voldemort. High Yield explosives and Nuclear bombs have already been used. The top ten Most Imaginative will be included in the story, and I am the judge. Don't expect to see anything until two chapters from now though.

Thanks! Please Read & Review!

(AN: To be very clear, the events of this chapter happen DURING and amidst the events of the previous chapter, as will the events of the next two chapters as a matter of fact. Not *after*, *during*! Please refrain from asking me "What is going on?" This is me [hopefully] explaining what is going on. This does not happen after Harry becomes a Quidditch God, this entire chapter happens very early on, while he's still mastering his Seeker Skills, during the Resets that he wasn't playing and practicing Quidditch. Best to consider FF Net Chapters 12-15 the Ron's Idea Story Arc. Please Enjoy!)

Chapter 12: Apparition

Harry needed to learn how to Apparate.

Flying everywhere he wanted to go, while good exercise, and helped him figure out this new boosting skill of his he'd discovered in his Quidditch training, was getting tedious. And it was tiring when he flew on his own all the way to London to get remedial lessons from the Twins in pranking. Not to mention he had to get his broom every morning and that was... well, messy.

So, first things first, learn the basics. If nothing else, his Quidditch training with the Team had instilled in him the right way to do things. Unfortunately, nobody taught the basics of Apparition to 15 years old's who hadn't even passed all his OWLs yet. This left Harry with his only recourse of figuring them out on his own.

Still, he couldn't start blind, he needed someone to point him in the right direction. Thankfully, Angelina and Alicia were both 17 years old and already had their licenses. But more importantly than that, they had the pamphlets that were handed out with the Apparition class for those 16 and 17 year olds in their Sixth and Seventh Years. It talked about the Three D's of Apparition, those being; Destination, Determination, and Deliberation. Focusing on where you want to be, willing yourself to be there, and then (according to the pamphlet) just doing it.

It also covered what the class would have the students do, standing in front of a hoop and Apparating into it, but also gave plenty of warnings about Splinching. Unfortunately, it didn't show the spell for reversing splinching on the pamphlet, instead saying something

about asking the instructor for assistance if it happens. Troublesome, but not the worst.

Going to the Room of Requirement, Harry focused on 'a place where he could learn how to Apparate'. When he walked through the door, he wasn't surprised to see the circle in the middle of the floor, but he was surprised to see the chalkboard back, with detailed instructions on it. Even more surprising was how much the instructions differed from the pamphlet instructions. Where the pamphlet was all about the Three D's, the board was talking about what Apparition was, what the wizard (or witch) focused on and did to Apparate and while Apparating, and how it worked in the first place.

Harry skimmed the board, did a double take before walking right up to it and began reading everything on it very carefully. According to this, Apparition was what separated Wizards from other Magical Creatures. Wizards were the only ones that could Apparate, and while House Elves could also disappear and reappear wherever they wanted to, how it worked for them was very different than what it was for Wizards. Other Magical Creatures could use magic, just in their unique ways, yet still the same as Wizards. That is what separated Magical from Mundane, the explanation on the board said. What separated Wizards from House Elves, Centaurs, Merpeople, and Dragons, aside from the obvious, was that Wizards could convert their bodies to magical energy, and open (the board used the term 'portals') wormholes that drew that magical energy into itself and then reassembled themselves on the other side of the wormhole. Of course this wormhole was so infinitesimally small that it could not be seen or measured and it opened and closed in the space of a heartbeat. There was a side note (literally it was written along the side of the board) that House Elves 'popped' by actually ceasing to be in one place, and returning to be someplace else entirely. The note insisted that no portal was ever opened when House Elves 'popped', they couldn't be traced through magic, and so it was not the same at all.

Harry then recalled the way he'd seen some of the Death Eaters and Order members sort of... fight while Apparating... 'What was that then?' he wondered.

Some more writing appeared at the bottom of the board, which had expanded itself appropriately.

"It is possible to 'half-Apparate', converting the body to pure magical energy, but never opening the portal and traveling through it. This is considered to be an advanced skill, indicating one is a Master Apparator. When converted to pure magic energy, the Apparating Wizard appears as either a white or a black streak of light. Any further details are a matter of perspective."

"Perspective?" he repeated out loud. And then thought about it for a second. "Oh. Light or dark. Guess there is a way to tell if a wizard is a dark wizard or not after all."

Turning his attention back to the actual instructions on how to Apparate, Harry went over them a dozen or more times before he felt comfortable enough to try it out. He walked over to the ring laying on the floor and stood in front of it. He looked around the room from where he stood, and then stepped inside the ring and looked all around the room from that perspective. He stepped out of the ring and closed his eyes. Five minutes later, he was still standing there with his eyes closed, a couple beads of sweat trickling down the sides of his brow. A minute after that, there was a loud crack as Harry vanished from where he stood and reappeared inside the circle... minus his arms and legs.

"Uh, whoa," Harry gulped as he stared at his limbs which all fell flat to the ground along with his main body, unable to support themselves without the others. "This is not good. Come on Harry, focus, focus, focus!" He shut his eyes and willed his arms and legs to Disapparate to him. He'd never heard of anyone trying this on their own, only that there was a spell to reattach the limb, but Harry didn't know the spell and his alternatives were bleak. So, he decided to just go ahead and try it anyway. Who knows? He may just succeed.

Four pops, one after the other assaulted Harry's ears, and when he opened his eyes he closed them again almost immediately. "Seriously?" he screamed at the universe, or the Room, whichever was listening. His left arm had appeared on his right side, while his left leg had appeared where his left arm was supposed to be, and vice versa for his other extremities. He closed his eyes again, and as with the Animagus exercises he'd done not too long ago, willed himself to Disapparate and to Apparate back in the ring, standing up this time. It worked. But he'd left his clothes behind.

Growling, Harry rolled his eyes and got dressed. Not that he had any problem with his own nudity, but he needed to be able to Apparate with clothing on. Once he was ready, he stepped back outside the circle, closed his eyes again, keeping the mental image of himself in mind and Disapparated once again. He was missing his head when he reappeared inside the circle.

"Oh come ON!" his bruised and rolling head screamed as his body hurried to catch up. Once he was being held, he closed his eyes and tried again.

Apparating back in, his head was reattached, but he was missing all his clothes again... and his right pinky toe.

Making a face, he grumbled to himself, annoyed, "This is going to take a while."

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It took Harry nearly half a dozen non-consecutive resets before he was Disapparating without splinching. Long-range Apparition was his next goal. He started by just trying to get out of the castle, maybe down to Hogsmeade. He found himself slamming into the wall of the Room of Requirement each and every time. Finally, he lost patience, needing to know why he couldn't Apparate long distance, and shouted out, "OK, what the bloody hell gives, huh? I need to know, how the bloody hell can I Apparate through these... these... these bloody Anti-Apparition wards?"

The Room, responding to his need, his requirement, changed around him all at once and he found himself in a red and gold room, the gold part being a number of golden circles on the floors, walls, and even ceiling. Instead of the magic black board, however, there was a single book stand against the far wall holding a rather large and a very old book upon it. Walking slowly, and carefully (he didn't know what the gold circles were for just yet) over to it, he was surprised to find the book, in spite of how old it was, in remarkably good condition. On the cover, embossed into the near-pristine brown leather, were the words "Grimoire of Gryffindor" with a stylized Gryffindor Lion just above it at the center.

Harry blinked and just stared at the treasure. How he had gotten the Room to reveal this, he couldn't even begin to guess at. Until all of a sudden, right before his eyes, the book, the Grimoire of Gryffindor, snapped itself open and the pages began to turn and flip at a rapid rate. When it finally stopped, Harry started breathing again and had to take a few moments to gather his courage and take a look at what it was showing him. He read the first few lines from the top of the page, and then blinked and re-read them. He flipped back to the beginning of the book and barely got to read the first page before it flipped right back to where it had stopped the first time.

Harry was reading Gryffindor's diary.

Well, diary made it sound rather girly. Journal maybe? Regardless, it was a book the Gryffindor wrote his personal thoughts and experiences into, so whatever it was called, it was still the same thing. Harry was reading words written by Gryffindor's own hand. The entry that it had opened to, and wouldn't allow him to read anything but that one entry, was Gryffindor's thoughts and opinion on the Wizard ability of teleporting. That's what he called it at any rate, from what little Harry could understand of the man's writing and the script he used. The words Apparate and Disapparate didn't seem to exist yet for him. He merely called it... no, not teleporting, Harry realized.

"Tele, Latin for distance," he mumbled as he recognized the other half of the words being used. "And portal, loosely meaning 'path of moving'. He actually called it 'tele-portaling'? Hah!" Harry laughed out loud as he puzzled that out. Another thing he realized, "The blackboard. It very nearly quotes what Gryffindor has written here. Minus the anecdotes that is."

Harry was allowed to turn the page, after finding that the entry continued for the next fifteen pages or so, Gryffindor's sloppy script written on both sides of each page. Reading through it, and then going back to the beginning and reading through it two more times, he couldn't stop grinning the whole time. If even half of his books, History, Potions or otherwise, were written in so interesting a manner, Harry worried that he'd be more of a bookworm than Hermione was. Nevertheless, he learned a great deal from Gryffindor's Grimoire. The man was a certifiable genius of magic. He was insane, Harry had no doubt about that whatsoever after reading

just one entry of the Grimoire, but still a certifiable genius. But still certifiably insane too.

According to the entry, the man had once actually tried to Apparate (though he didn't use that term) straight through the wards of some dark wizard, (or warlord, he wasn't too specific), with a brute force attack. That he succeeded spoke more towards the ineptitude of the ward-makers than Gryffindor's prowess however. It described how he and his good friend, Sal, (Slytherin Harry realized), had come across a dark wizard that had the best magical wards either of them had ever seen, and to go in any way other than Apparating would be suicide, and there was no choice but to go in, as this particular dark wizard had hostages. Hostages that would later reveal to include Godric's and Salazar's future wives, the Ladies Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff. Godric's entry went on to say that he tried something incredibly foolish, and while undoubtedly brave, suicidally insane as well.

He called it Ward Bouncing. Disapparating so fast and so often that you never actually fully Apparate back into the physical world. While in that invisible, constantly moving state, he actually slammed himself against the wards again and again and again until he found the smallest of cracks in them. And then he was in, bouncing back and forth between the cracks in the many wards and defenses that had been in place. His friend Salazar told him later on that there had, for brief moments, been nearly a hundred of him running around the place, disappearing and reappearing again and again. And then the wards fell, overloaded from the strain put on them.

After Godric's first apprentice blew himself up trying to repeat the event, Gryffindor went into great detail about how he did it and was pleased to note in the Grimoire that his next few apprentices were quite capable of doing the same after reading his expanded notes.

The final part of the entry, however, was about his friend Sal inventing something he called, (and here the script had been changed to very bold and all capitalized letters), "ANTI-APPEARING WARDS". Those new wards had stopped Gryffindor's apprentices from 'Ward Bouncing' through them, instead stopping them right at the edge of the ward, often splinching them. The entry went on to say that Salazar, and his wife the Lady Ravenclaw, had made improvements on these Anti-Appearing wards placed over and around Hogwarts, so that even if there were thousands of Godrics,

teamed up with a hundred Merlins and every other wizard or witch that could learn Ward Bouncing, the wards would never fail, if anything they would get stronger and give the Ward Bouncer more things to bounce off of.

Gryffindor took it as a challenge and documented all his attempts. The final attempt was documented extremely well and with a light hand, as though the writer had been happy and distracted when writing it. The trick was, Gryffindor wrote, opening the exit portal (Apparition point) just outside of the ward-line, but rather than reintegrate immediately, stay as pure magic energy and let that energy start interacting and 'bouncing around' the ward itself and from there the original ward-bouncing technique worked just fine. Or so he said.

After having read through the story a few times, Harry carefully and intently went back over the descriptions of the two techniques until he could recite them from memory. More than that, so that he could do them without having to think too hard about it. When he finally turned away from the Grimoire, he'd figured out what all the gold rings were for. He took a deep breath and swallowed a gulp, or three. This was going to hurt, he just knew it.

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The first step towards Ward Bouncing was being able to Hyper-Apparate, or as the newly reappeared Blackboard described it, 'Rapid Disapparition conjoined amidst multiple simultaneous Apparation within a confined space'. Or in layman's terms disappearing and reappearing as quickly as possible within a single room rather than all over the place.

That's what all the rings were for. He had to Disapparate from one, Apparating to another and then another and another and another, all as quickly as he could. After ten or so such Apparitions, his whole body started to ache, but he kept going anyway. Some thirty more times after that, he collapsed upon reintegration and was unconscious before his head hit the floor. He woke up in his bed after a reset, only to discover that it was late at night, not seven in the morning.

Daring to hope, he went and checked several things, only to become depressed when Hermione and Ron informed him that he just wouldn't wake up and so they left him there, unsure who to go to. He was still stuck in the time loop. But for some reason, what he'd tried with the Hyper-Apparating had drained him so heavily that he'd passed out for the rest of that reset and more than half of the next one!

On Hermione's advice, and because he wanted to know, he went to Madam Pomphrey and had her check his magic levels and see if there was some traceable cause for his blackout.

She was confused by the results, as was Harry once she explained them to him. Apparently, his magic was at roughly three times the amount of what it should be for a wizard his age, and there had been signs of him recently being drained to near-death and his core over-producing to compensate for the loss. Harry wondered if this was the long term consequence of him facing the Rolling Death, but even after doing that and being closer to magical exhaustion than he'd ever been before, he'd never just passed out and slept through a reset like this. He took it easy for the rest of that Reset, and then went straight to the Room of Requirement and Gryffindor's Apparition Room, minus the Grimoire at the start of the next one.

He picked up the exercises exactly where he'd left off, and was pleasantly surprised that it was easier than before. After roughly fifty or sixty rapid Disapparations however, he'd lost count at some point, he felt the same pain from when he'd passed out and knew that he'd reached his limit, for the moment. He decided to work more on his Magic Control for the rest of the day. Perhaps, he mused, the reason he was tiring out was he was wasting too much magic when Apparating.

After spending the rest of the morning till Lunch on moving heavy objects through three-dimensional mazes via Leviosa spells, Harry realized he'd fallen out of practice with his Elemental magic. He'd been practicing a number of spells and had been working and manipulating and controlling his connections to the elements themselves, which is how he'd bested Draco a while back when he'd been clothing optional for a while there. It could be said that he could control his elemental powers as well as a First Year controlled their magic. Enough to make the wind blow, water turn hot or cold and sometimes float like bubbles, or revert transfigured stone back

to its natural state, and sometimes make himself flame proof. Beyond that though, there was little more than he could do with it in a fight. Hence the extra training.

Roughly about the same time he would normally be taking his OWL, (thankfully his Occlumency had improved to the point so when he pretended to be dead from Snape killing him and hiding the body, not even Voldemort could tell he was still alive), he switched from standard Magic Control exercises to Elemental Magic Control exercises. He decided to start with his first element; Air.

Breathing in and out, feeling the magic in the air and focusing on it, he formed a cutting blade of wind between his palms, and then he moved his palms further apart until they were at the most he could stretch them and still keep them in line with each other (and not decapitate himself). Continuing to breathe, he felt how the line of cutting wind was unbroken and steady, even with him exhaling on it, the magic never so much as wavered. In fact...

Opening his eyes, he saw his breath fog, another trick he'd learned he could do by combining water and air magics, and saw how when the breath reached the invisible line between his hands, it was actually cut, like it had hit an obstruction and flowed around it in response, as air did. It would seem he'd finally mastered the final exercise of Elemental Control for Air, by being able to cut the air itself with the magic.

He closed his hands and moved on to his next element; Earth.

Where wind and air was about cutting, earth was about solid force, IE crushing. The first exercise, which he'd learned while being entombed beneath Hogwarts after making his contracts and beating Dumbledore on that reset who knows how long ago, was to just sit and feel the pressure, the power of the Earth, and to make himself as similar to that so he might draw in some of the power and succeed in containing it. After that, it went back to the leaf and using that power, the pressure of the Earth itself to crush the leaf into fine powder, without actually crushing the leaf with his hands of course. After that, he had to do the same thing to a rock, and then water, turning it into ice through pressure alone. Crushing fire though, that was harder than one might think. For one thing, the fire couldn't go out, and another you weren't trying to create lava, but compressed

flame that is still burning in fact. Air, by comparison, was actually easier.

Next; Water.

Compared to the other elemental exercises he was doing, he had expected water to be the easiest of all. Turns out, it was the next-to-hardest of the four elements in fact. Water was more about erosion and soaking than the crushing of Earth and the cutting of Air. First exercise for Water; soaking a leaf to the point at which it practically dissolved in his hands, and then the same with a stone. Rather than trying to erode or 'soak' fire and air, however, this is where things differed. The last few exercises were in changing the states of normal water, turning it to ice and steam and even changing the consistency of it's liquid state. The final exercise is what he was working on now, drawing water from a bowl beside him and using his elemental magic as precisely as possible, draw up all of the water, every molecule of it, from the bowl and then lash it out like a whip against a stone block and erode the stone block with each strike of the water whip. It was harder than anything else he'd done, and what he was doing now was doing it with each finger on both hands. Ten different water whips, all requiring every bit of his concentration, all striking at the same time while moving in very different ways. The stone block was a pile of soaked gravel within seconds.

And finally; Fire.

Fire, obviously, burned. But it was more about what made fire what it was than just about burning away leaves and stones. Picking up a few stones from the pile of soaked gravel, Harry concentrated on his Fire Element Magic and made his hands resistant to heat, mostly by making them hotter than what he was about to do. Focusing on the essence, the molecules of the water-logged rocks, Harry used his magic to speed them up, making them move so fast they very nearly threw themselves apart, and changed their state without burning them, melting the stones and evaporating the water into steam in a matter of seconds. Holding his breath, he kept moving it faster and faster until they did throw themselves apart and changed state again, until the stone had evaporated with the water and his hand was clear, though looking a bit burned from holding the rapidly heating material for as long as he did.

Waving away the cloud of former stone, he stepped back and checked the time. He'd been practicing for nearly five hours now.

"Oookaaayyy..." he drew a slow breath. "Let's try Apparating again then."

The Room shifted back to the red and gold ring setting and Harry stepped up to the first ring and took another slow breath. Focusing on what he was going to do and keeping a tight reign on his magic, letting no more than the absolute necessary amount through for what he wanted done, he closed his eyes and Disapparated, again and again and again. He silently counted out over fifty Apparations, only opening his eyes long enough to choose his next target, before Disapparating again. There were roughly one hundred circles on the floor of the room, but that didn't count all the circles on the walls and certainly not the ones on the ceiling. Harry stopped himself after his fifty-seventh Disapparation, feeling that whole-body ache again. He definitely did not want to miss as much time as he had when he'd passed out from too much Apparating, though he was pleased to see that he got as far as he did.

Wanting to see how far he could get, he called the House Elves for a snack, and took about fifteen minutes to just sit, eat, and regain his strength. Once his body no longer ached from his previous Disapparating, he went back to the first ring, which was the furthest to the right side of the that was on the floor from the door. It was a ten by ten grid of rings, deciding to move from right to left, he took a deep breath and let it out slow. As soon as he finished his exhale, he Disapparated, and reappeared for one full second in the ring to his immediate left, before Disapparating again. When he reached the halfway point, he began to feel some straining, but thankfully it wasn't the same pain as before.

'Yet,' he thought to himself.

He'd reached the sixtieth ring by the time the pain started, but he held on and with only a few moments longer time to steel himself, he Disapparated again and moved on to the next ring and the next and the next. The amount of time between Apparations got longer as he had to practically force himself to move on to the next ring each time. He was to the point where he wanted to collapse again by the time he got three quarters of the way through, but still, keeping an even tighter reign on how much magic he released, he forced himself to

move on to the next ring. When he reached the ninetieth ring, he knew that he would collapse for at least the rest of the Reset and perhaps all of the next one if he Disapparated even one more time without taking a rest.

Falling to his knees, he tried to figure out what it was that was draining the energy out of him. He could feel his magic, he wasn't in danger of magical exhaustion, but his body felt like it was about to tear itself apart, he hurt so bad. It wasn't as bad as the Cruciatus, but it was right up there. Raising his hand to his face, he was surprised to feel something wet there. Wiping it away, figuring it was sweat, he stopped when he saw his hand was now red. Bloody red.

A mirror appeared on the wall as soon as he stood up and stumbled over to it. He blinked and stared. Blood was coming out of his pores, and from his eyes, nose and ears. His solid black mop of hair had three white, not gray, white streaks in them. On either sides of his temples and one going back from the bangs that typically covered his scar.

"OK, no more pushing," he said, only noticing as he spoke that his mouth was filled with blood as well, and his tongue and teeth hurt as bad as the rest of him. Shaking his head, he wondered what Madam Pomphrey would say, seeing him like this. He paused before turning away from the mirror, giving himself a bloody grin. Better yet, what would people say about Snape if anyone saw him like this?

It was after all one of the resets where he framed Snape for killing/kidnapping him while actually spending the whole day training in the Room of Requirement.

Walking out the door, Harry only had to stumble down the hall to the Fat Lady's Portrait and try to speak, letting the blood in his mouth spill out, and then gratefully collapse right in front of her, smearing a bloody hand print across her canvas. Her screams and the commotion she caused was as bad as his Third Year when Sirius had attacked her. Hermione and Ron were the first ones out the door from the Common Room and Neville helped them in carrying him to the Hospital Wing, running the whole way, and not one of them caring that they were getting his blood all over them. Ginny ran ahead and made damn sure no one got in their way while Hermione helped the boys hold him up.

He really had the best friends ever, he mused before passing out due to blood loss.

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There is no such thing as a perfect energy conversion.

Harry added that to the sub-grouping of things under his Prime Rule, where nothing but magic changes while in the loop. The process by which Wizards Apparate is to convert their bodies to pure magical energy and then travel through a portal they open up through magic as well. That word, 'convert', all the books use it, and even the pamphlet mentions it once or twice, though he wouldn't swear to that. The point, however, was that nothing in nature, or otherwise, ever converts to something else one hundred percent with no left over.

When a Wizard Disapparates, some part, even if it's only a few cells here and there rather than whole organs, remains biological rather than pure magical. And then when traveling through the wormhole, the portal made by magic, what if some piece, magical or otherwise, gets left behind? And what about reintegration, when Apparating back in? How much that is supposed to be changed back to biological, remains magical?

Harry's magic may not suffer from rapid Disapparations, but it was clear that his body did. After all, he's literally taking himself apart on a cellular level and converting all that matter into pure energy, sending it through space via some method of travel science is only beginning to understand, while magical studies only observe that it works without asking the how. It's to be expected that there may be some loss in the conversion, especially when he does it so many times in such a short amount of time. Splinching, he came to realize, was exactly that. But somehow his innate magic made it so it wasn't fatal or irreversible. He wondered how, until he recalled all the times he'd nearly been killed as a child and all the 'Accidental magic' that had happened, as well as Neville's story of how he bounced after being thrown from a window.

That at least explained why he'd just passed out when he'd killed himself by over-Apparation that first time. It was odd that he overslept so much the next reset, since his body should have been fully repaired after the reset, and then there was Madam Pomphrey

reporting that his magic seemed like it had been drained recently and was overcompensating for the loss...

When he came to from his blood loss, he was surprised he hadn't reset yet. Turned out he'd only been out for a couple of minutes and the School Nurse was in the process of feeding him some Blood Replenishing potions when he came to. She forced the rest down his throat and then gently explained to him what 'Severus' had 'done to him' and what was happening to him. Harry's body was more or less tearing itself apart and using his magic to do it, but his magic as it turned out, was actually adapting his body to itself instead. That, she explained, would make it harder for the same thing to happen in the future, and his magic would try and change his body so that such injuries were all but impossible, at least as far as self-infliction went he assumed.

When he woke up the next Reset, he'd slept through his alarm and woke up ten minutes later than normal. That, more than anything, proved to him what she had said was true. His magic was changing his body and after each reset, changed him just a little bit more, physically speaking. That explained how he could do so much more after that first time.

He held off on Apparation training for a while, pursuing other interests and catching up on his other training before going back to it. He found that each time he pushed himself to the limit where his body started to ache, if he just waited a few minutes, as few as a quarter of an hour, he could easily pull off the same plus half as many more Disapparations the next time he tried it before reaching his 'warning point' again. Every other day, he spent about an hour in the Room just working on his Hyper-Apparate skill. By the time he started taunting Krum in order to come visit him at Hogwarts for a Seeker challenge or two, he was able to do the hundred Apparations in under sixty seconds without having to worry about breaking himself.

In order to Ward Bounce, however, he needed to do those hundred Apparations in under ten seconds, at the very least!

He found it easier if he just kept in mind where and how he was going to Disapparate and Apparate beforehand and then just do it, no looking between turns to see where he would go next. As such, he began to experiment with what Ron was trying to teach him on

the Quidditch Pitch, reaching out with his senses to know where everything around him was so he could just go without having to think it out beforehand. By the time he stopped getting Krum to come visit, Harry began trying his hand at Ward Bouncing his way out of Hogwarts.

Thankfully, anytime he failed, the Castle sent him right back to the Room of Requirement where he could try again after a brief rest and a snack. It was quite an experience, he had to admit. If Apparating was like being squeezed down into a tiny tube at impossible speeds, Ward Bouncing was like being squeezed via a tiny tube into a tinier pinball and getting launched into the world's largest and most convoluted pinball machine. After several thousand attempts, each with a healthy rest period after, Harry discovered that he was beginning to learn the layout of Hogwarts' wards, and it wasn't too much longer, about another two or three thousand attempts, before he found a... well not really a hole, but more like an access point that was keyed into Dumbledore, or rather keyed in to the Headmaster, who was still Dumbledore as far as Hogwarts was concerned.

Going straight for it just had him bounced around a bunch more times before going straight back to the Room of Requirement. A little bit of exploring and he found several ways to get to that access point in the wards, and from there he could then quite easily Apparate anywhere he wanted. He could Apparate outside of Hogwarts to practically anywhere in the world, or by the same token he could Apparate anywhere within Hogwarts' wards. The catch was, he found out the hard way, was that it was keyed to the Headmaster for a reason, and once he'd used that access, he was blocked unless he either found some other way to get to it, or got the Headmaster to give him said access. He only did that once, but that was neither here nor there.

Fortunately, he'd found the access by the time he wanted to start going to Krum rather than bringing Krum to him. After being caught in the Floo more than a few times while using it to get to the Bulgarian International Team's Stadium, he'd rather Apparate the distance than waste time dealing with the Ministry. As far as his long distance Apparation, well it seemed that all his practice with Hyper-Apparating helped build up his stamina and after managing to get to Hogsmeade and then London without any difficulty, he tried to see just how far he could go. He started off by going from London, England to Paris, France. Then Berlin, Germany. Then much further.

Moscow, Russia. Hong Kong, China. Sydney, Australia. Honolulu, Hawaii, United States. Hollywood California, United States. New York City, United States. Dublin, Ireland. And then a short hop back over to Hogsmeade.

All done in under thirty seconds. He timed it with a mechanical stop watch that he left in Hogsmeade before starting the trip to London.

Around the world in thirty seconds, he wondered if that was a new record. Then he remembered going into orbit and had seen a couple of space shuttles up there. From what he remembered of the technological wonders in grade school, some of them actually circled the world in less time than that, depending on their orbit. Of course that was an exceedingly long time ago for him, so he might be overestimating the speeds involved.

Anyway, once he learned how to Apparate long distance, it was easy to get to Bulgaria and get training from Krum and his Team, and even easier to get down to London for the Twins to continue his Prank Training. All that was left to learn was how to overload the standard wards by Ward Bouncing them, and according to the Grimoire of Gryffindor, that unfortunately required that he do several hundred, if not a full thousand Disapparations in less than thirty seconds. And not all necessarily to the center or floor of whatever was warded that he was trying to get to. Hence all the rings on the walls and ceiling.

Apparating to the ceiling was definitely a new experience. The first few times, he appeared upright as always, with his head up and his feet down, but that also meant that he started to fall before he could Disapparate again. Then he tried adjusting how he reappeared, 'standing' on the ceiling or 'walking' on the walls and was pleasantly surprised to find that it wasn't difficult at all, just required some unique perspectives. He could even change his position mid-Apparition he found out, by accident, one day!

He'd been standing straight when he Disapparated, and then when he Apparated back on the ceiling, he was crouching in a three-point stance, and then when he appeared on the wall he was in a sort of crab-walking position, that made it look like he was hanging from the wall by his hands and feet, and then from there he finished back on the floor in his meditation pose, legs crossed and arms at the sides. And if that weren't enough, he also figured out how to do that

Apparition-streamer technique that all the Order members and Death Eaters could do. He was pleased to note that his own stream of light was a solid white, and even more pleased to learn that he could cast spells while in this state and shooting all over the room.

That was the limitation he discovered about that particular technique. When in that form, you could only go where you could see! Long distance was out of the question, unless it was a similar distance to what you'd cover on the back of a broomstick or winged animal. In short, it was a way of getting to hard-to-reach places while still being able to use magic, but it was not an expedient means of travel. Even more surprising was that Harry found he couldn't Ward Bounce when Apparating that way, as the Anti-Apparition wards blocked him from even getting close, instead skirting him along the edge until he was either knocked back or on the other side of the warded area.

Once, just to see what would happen, he tried Apparating while Ramping his broom during practice with Madam Hooch one afternoon. Nothing happened. Literally that is, nothing at all happened. His broom didn't Ramp, and he didn't Apparate. It was like the magic cut itself off, or more likely was canceled out by each of the techniques he'd tried to use. A little more experimentation with it and he discovered that he couldn't 'Stream' (it wasn't called that, but he thought the name fit) and fly the broom at the same time, or if he did it was one or the other. He could long-distance and Hyper-Apparate while on a broom, and even in the middle of flying too. Ramping, however, made things... difficult. It wasn't impossible, but the next time he tried and even halfway succeeded in Disapparating while Ramping, he very nearly tore his body apart, same as when he'd Disapparated too many times too quickly, but a hundred times worse.

Apparently his magic had limits, and keeping him alive while Disapparating and Ramping his broom to it's maximum potential at the same time was one of those limits. Again, an either/or situation.

He just hoped that he never came across a situation where he had to bank on being able to do both at the same time after he finally got out of this Time Loop!

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Harry Apparated into the Atrium right after the last Ministry Worker had Flooed home for the day. As he passed all the Floo Fireplaces, he sealed them up by calling upon the Earth element and bending the ground and stone to blocking off the entrances. The guard to the Atrium had also gone home for the day, so Harry merely lay his traps where he liked all over the place. Some of them were delayed spells, some were Prank-inspired/borrowed tools escalated up to lethal levels, while still others were rather simplistic by anyone's standards, it was just quicker to set up using magic than doing it manually.

Once he was past the Atrium, he used the Fire element to burn away and cut all the supports to all the lifts save for the one he was using, taking it to the Department of Mysteries. Once there, he stepped out of the lift just as it fell to crash amongst the others. Coming down the shafts behind him was all the water from the Atrium fountain, flowing in streams and coalescing into a number of medium sized water spheres around him. Likewise, a nearly visible sphere of wind formed around his body, forming a shield around which the water spheres orbited. As he passed each candle, the flames jumped from where they were to a ring of fire that continuously grew around Harry's waist, just outside the air shield. With each step he took, the stones all around quivered, anxious to help the one that could call upon them at a moment's notice.

By the time he made it to the spinning room, he didn't bother shutting the doors at all, instead, leaving a rather large pile of dungbombs in the middle of the room right next to a rather specially designed Weasley Firework. He went straight through the Hall of Offices, setting up a few more delayed spells here and there, before finally getting to the door to the Hall of Prophecies. He casually strolled down the rows until he got to Row 97 and barely pausing, he grabbed the prophecy with his name on it and kept right on strolling along.

"Stop right there, Potter," Lucius Malfoy's voice snapped out from the darkness. Harry didn't bother stopping and even started to whistle as he strolled down the hall, but one of the water spheres reacted quite violently to Malfoy's threat.

The water sphere flew through the air and lashed out with three water tendrils into the dark. There were a number of screams, one of which was Malfoy's.

"KILL HIM!" Bellatrix's crazed voice screamed out.

Harry continued to stroll along, though perhaps at a slightly more brisk pace than before, as the remaining water spheres lashed out at the group of Death Eaters, and the ring of fire joining them, increasing its size, heat and becoming a solid disc of flame to act as a shield between the Death Eaters and Harry's position. The air shield remained in place around his body. All the Death Eaters were casting lethal spells, but it did little good against water tendrils and a wall of fire. If they tried to put out the fire with Aquamenti, the water was immediately absorbed by one or all of the spheres, making them bigger, and the same happened if they tried to incinerate or boil away the water, as the fire wall absorbed any and all fire-based spells and grew larger and hotter from it all. As such, Harry barely had to worry about any of those lethal spells coming his way, and the few that got through to him splashed harmlessly against his air shield.

"POTTER!" Malfoy screamed. "YOU WON'T GET AWAY WITH THIS!"

Harry paused at the door back to the Hall of Offices, and turned back to respond. "You sound like that pathetic offspring you call a son, Malfoy. Of course I'm going to get away with it. The question now is whether or not I take out Voldemort with the rest of you. I can't believe it took me this long to figure out how to get all of you at once. My own fault, I suppose. I kept trying to duel the lot of you, rather than just kill you outright." With that said, he turned and walked through the door, shutting it behind him.

As soon as the sound of the door shutting finished echoing amongst all the fighting, at the same time the wall of fire went out and all the water dropped to the ground, nothing more than water. Surprised at the sudden change, the Death Eaters just stood there for a moment, trying to catch their collective breath. As such, some of them could actually hear the sub-audible rumbling that had started all around them. It wasn't a sound, so much an overwhelming vibration that they all felt to the core of their bones. Suddenly, there was a crashing sound and a pillar fell down from ceiling, crushing one of masked wizards where he stood.

"What? What was that? What is that?" Bellatrix suddenly screamed, going up to the pillar and touching it. Aside from the red stains starting at the bottom, it was a perfectly smooth square pillar of solid rock, looking to them all as though it had actually been carved straight from the rock when the room had been first constructed.

"How did... no, it can't be..." Malfoy muttered in mounting shock.

"What? What, Malfoy?" Bellatrix screamed into the man's face. "What is it?"

"Potter did this," Malfoy answered, "Somehow, I don't know how, Potter did this. He... he was controlling the water, and then the flame, and now... this? Potter is using Elemental Magic!"

"What? No! Impossible! Only the Dark Lord could...! What? Huh?" all the other Death Eaters started shouting at once.

"SHUT UP!" Bellatrix screamed, right as another crashing sound echoed out and if the man hadn't jumped out of the way in time, he might have found himself similarly smeared against the ceiling as the floor tile beneath his feet had shifted and then rocketed to the ceiling the same as the other spire had crashed to the floor. "What is this, Malfoy?"

"Earth magic," Malfoy whimpered right as the ground, all the stone tiles beneath their feet began to shake and rumble like there was an earthquake going on. Above their heads, some of them also noticed the stone tiles on the ceiling were also shaking and rumbling. "MERC—*!" Malfoy's scream was cut off as both the ceiling and floor shot towards one another like a trap closing its teeth, crushing everything between floor and ceiling in the Hall of Prophecies down into a finely ground paste.

At the end of the Hall of Offices, Harry sat patiently as he listened to the prophecy given by Trelawney again and again, waiting for Voldemort to show up. The monster knew the moment his trap had failed, each and every time, and was there within minutes with his remaining forces. Not out of any sort of vengeance or justice for their deaths, but because if he lost the entire attack force he'd committed to this one operation all at once, he believed that Dumbledore had brought some serious heavy hitters to stop them and thus he would need everything he currently had to come out ahead. Thankfully

none of the giants had made it to England yet from their homeland, but there were still plenty of trolls and Dementors that Voldemort could call upon, not to mention more than a few werewolves, vampires, and other dark creatures. Hence, all the traps he'd been laying all over the place.

Listening to the prophecy over and over again, Harry came to the conclusion that Trelawney was the real deal, it's just that she didn't have another "real deal" to learn from, which explained why so many of her lessons were virtually the same as what you saw from a gypsy fortune teller at carnivals. He remembered the rumor about her great great grandmother being a famous seer. No one else in the family since Cassandra Trelawney had possessed any trace of Seer powers or natural divination ability. That certainly explained some things, he thought.

Harry was broken out of his musings when there was a loud explosion at the other end of the Hall, and a pungent stench drifted along after it. Grinning, in spite of the smell, Harry said to himself, "Showtime."

Standing to his feet, he stepped on the glass ball, destroying the prophecy and then held his arms out wide. "Incendio," he whispered, and then drew the sparks from the tip of his wand to between his spread hands and then poured his magic into the fire until it grew, and grew and pretty soon he was holding an inferno between his outstretched hands. Beads of sweat trickled down his face and neck, as he focused his concentration more intensely than he ever had before. Taking a shallow breath, he then pushed the inferno ball down the hall, until it was practically flying towards the open doorway at the end to the spinning room, lighting everything aflame in it's passing. Once the giant fireball was on its way, Harry took a deeper breath, and then tapping into his Air magic, blew a strong supporting wind to fuel the fire he'd just started at the heart of the Ministry of Magic. Where it was an inferno before, it quickly became a blaze of hellfire straight from the Pit!

Walking along the path of destruction, Harry gathered around his waist another ring of fire and reapplied the spherical air shield around his body as he walked along, until he came to the door leading to the Death Room from the Hall of Offices. Opening the door and walking through, he pulled out his wand and shot his Patronus, silently, down the hall towards where the Dementors were

no doubt gathering. He then walked over and stood on the back side of the platform where the Veil stood from where the entrance to the room was.

"POTTER!" Voldemort screamed the moment he was in the room. "You will pay for all of this!"

"Are you kidding?" Harry laughed from behind the Veil, "I can't afford what the Ministry is going to charge for these damages! I'd be broke before they even got to the Hall of Prophecies, let alone all the fire damage and that mess you made in the entry room. I think I'll blame you instead and you can pay for all of it."

"Give me the prophecy," Voldemort hissed, stepping up on the other side of the platform, glaring at Harry through the fluttering Veil.

"Come get it," was Harry's reply, as he then changed into his White Worm Serpent Animagus form and dove through the Veil straight at Voldemort. The Immortal creature was not even remotely affected by the Veil's death magic and had wrapped itself around Voldemort in less than a blink of an eye. He then changed directly into an Anaconda snake, also known as a Boa Constrictor, and began to squeeze the life out of the Dark Lord.

"What do you think you are doing?" Voldemort hissed at the snake strangling the life out of him, no less than six coils wrapped tightly around his wand arm so he couldn't even think of casting a spell with his phoenix core wand.

"What does it look like I'm doing, Tom?" Harry hissed back in the same language. "I'm trying to kill you! Now drop the wand already, you ugly HSSHHHSSP!" Harry didn't know what the word translated to in English, but it was obviously a pretty heinous insult in the language of the snakes.

Voldemort then hissed a word that Harry's understanding translated as "Reject", and suddenly Harry found his snake body being shoved away from Voldemort like he'd been hit with a banishing spell. Mid-air, he changed into his Chupacabra form and vanished into the shadows. Once there, he resumed human form and took a few moments to catch his breath.

Voldemort was cursing up a storm, threatening everyone Harry ever cared about, but Harry was ignoring him, and keeping his Occlumency at full effort, while trying to figure out what to do next. There were a few other Animagus forms that he could try, but Voldemort seemed to be an expert when it came to magical creatures, and he had some way of dealing with whatever he changed into, some almost before he could actually do anything. Time to try his other ace.

Sticking his hand into the stone floor, Harry connected with the Earth and soon had the chamber collapsing all around Voldemort, throwing and dropping rocks on him. Unfortunately, because of the Veil, he couldn't do the same crushing trick he had in the Hall of Prophecies, but the flying projectiles seemed to be doing well, as even the ones that Voldemort managed to atomize with powerful curses, the dust and fragments still threw themselves at the Dark Lord, cutting him at every opportunity.

When Voldemort conjured that Slytherin Shield of his that he typically used against Dumbledore, Harry knew he had him on the ropes. Taking a breath, Harry then reached out with his other hand and suddenly all of the torches ringing the room lit up brighter than ever, all a bright flaming blue. Not the blue of the Bluebell Flames spell, but the blue of a welding torch, the hottest a flame can be before turning white. Without going out, or leaving their torches, the flames all sent a continuous barrage of orange-red fireballs at Voldemort, who was still near the center of the room. The assault of Earth and Fire continued for several more minutes before the victim of said assault finally lost the last vestiges of patience, and dropped his shield and was suddenly surrounded by a dome of icy water, created by the rapid waving of his wand. The icy shell stopped the stones, and the water itself snuffed the flames just as effectively. Harry had the stones and torches throw one last barrage at him, and then cupped his hands over his mouth and blew out an icy wind that frosted over everything faster than even the Dementors could do it, and suddenly that icy shell wasn't just a shell, but a solid ice sphere, frozen to the ground, and trapping the Dark Lord where he stood.

Then he cast out both hands to either side, while still remaining hidden in the shadows, he focused the air into sharp blades of wind and then sent them straight at the ice block at the base of the room. Before they reached however, the ice cracked and then shattered, and the wave of force from whatever curse Voldemort had used to

break free, overwhelmed the wind blades and the magic dispersed before doing any damage.

"Damn it!" Harry near-silently cursed, but that was more than enough for Voldemort as he tracked Harry by that whisper alone and had an Avada Kadavra shooting for his position before the echo of the blast from the ice shattering had even stopped bouncing along the walls. The echo of the crack from Harry's Disapparation, however, was still going strong after the Death Curse had hit and abolished the pillar Harry had been hiding behind.

He Apparated back into the Ministry, just outside the door to the Department of Mysteries. Speaking of which, he closed it, locked it with every locking spell he knew, and then had the floor and ceiling of the corridor leading to said door close up so there was practically fifty feet of solid stone between the rest of the Ministry and the entrance to the Department of Mysteries. After he'd left the corridor of course.

From there, he Disapparated up one floor at a time until he'd made his way to the Atrium, which was filled with all of the dark creatures the Dark Lord had brought with him that couldn't make it down the broken elevator shafts. Taking one look at the grumbling crowd of dark creatures, Harry considered fleeing, but then remembered all his Defense Against the Dark Arts lessons he'd had about some of these very same creatures. And then turned into a dragon and started shooting blue lightning bolts at them one after the other. The trolls sometimes took two shots, while the vampires barely even needed to be grazed before they went up in flames. The werewolves, Inferi, and gremlins only needed one shot each.

Getting slightly out of breath, and noticing said breath was starting to frost a little bit, Harry changed straight from dragon to an Ifrit, an Arabian Fire Beast. They were one of the origins muggles used to describe genies bound to lamps. Others used the depiction in comparison to the Devil made flesh. Honestly, he could see where both groups were coming from.

The moment he'd changed completely, his whole body was enshrouded in burning red flames, enough that they only saw the red of the flames conforming to his quite muscular body. Around his feet and legs, an inferno raged, bright and hot enough to completely conceal his cloven and reverse-jointed feet and legs. He knew from

self-examination that he had coarse black fur and a pair of four-fingered fists, held up by massive shoulders and huge arms, surrounding a large bare barrel chest and clean cut six-pack abdomen. The head though, that's where things got interesting. He had the face of a lion, minus the whiskers, and the horns of a mountain goat or oxen. Being that he was still physically immature, they only swept back the breadth of his head and went no further, in fact looking a bit slim on the whole.

As for distinguishing marks, what separated him from other Ifrit, was that most Ifrit had burning red eyes. Harry's were a smoldering green, as in they were actually smoldering, making it look like he was crying smoke at times. The other thing was that where his scar was, no flames would touch. Thus his scar was even more distinctive as amidst all the burning red flames, there was that one small patch around his forehead where there was a black lightning bolt. Black because of the fur showing through the surrounding flames.

Ifrit-Harry pooled some of his flames around his ever-clenched fists. He then spread his arms wide, the flames growing in strength and brightness before him. And then he clapped.

It was a familiar gesture for the genie stereotype, simply because it wasn't just a straight up clap, but a clap right in front of his face with his elbows straight out to either side, same as when they're granting wishes. In his case though, it was him flooding the Ministry with the power of fire. If there was an open door or window, or elevator shaft, the fire got through and quickly swept through until there was nothing left but stone or ash. Any traces of water would have evaporated in the heat before the fire ever reached the source. The only thing that could douse the flame of an Ifrit was the open air or the power of Earth and Air combined. Both actually translated to the same thing in the old books Harry read about this form in; the desert wind with particles of sand being carried by the wind.

In the aftermath, Ifrit-Harry waited for the flames of his clap to die down and then changed into his Eastern Fire Salamander form, and began eating on the flaming ashes. He'd eaten just about all of the smoldering fires in the burnt Atrium, when his scar burned and very nearly had him screaming in agony on the floor. Fortunately 'burning' to a Salamander is not the same thing it would be to a human wizard. But it still hurt more than it should have.

Harry changed back to his standard form and started employing his Occlumency illusion defense, but it barely kept the pain and the pressure at bay.

He was coming.

Harry sat down on the edge of the dried out and soot ridden fountain and considered his options. Elemental magic wasn't going to work. The bastard had proved he knew his own element better than Harry knew all of his, and likewise that when he was at a disadvantage he could easily overpower all of Harry's efforts.

The last time Harry went at him with his Animagus forms, well as versatile as it was to turn into the zoo that he could, Harry's normal animals were completely defenseless when the Dark Lord used magic against them. His twenty, twenty-five magical forms however, while they could sometimes catch him off guard, they had all failed individually against him. The Ifrit, powerful fire elemental that it was, Voldemort knew all the spells it was vulnerable to and could have Harry ensnared and enslaved inside of five minutes. His dragon form, he used that blinding curse and then had him hogtied with his own tail before he could so much as inhale to spit lightning fire. His Athene Owl form, his next strongest form, likewise, he knew the spells that wizards had used for centuries to bind or defeat such creatures, and had him either retreating, or literally eating out of the palm of his hand faster than he could be bound in Ifrit form.

There were a couple of forms he hadn't tried against him, but he couldn't see how they would do any better. Those were, quite simply, his first (and probably natural) Animagus form, a Flying Reindeer, and then the Shokushu-Oni, aka his Tentacle Demon form. Everything else either failed to do any good, or the bastard already knew what needed to be done to defeat that form and was already halfway to doing so by the time Harry had finished changing.

That just left his newly developed Hyper-Apparating skill...

Well, it was worth a shot, he figured with a shrug.

Voldemort shot up the shaft, flying through the air with hardly any effort at all. Harry started streaming all over the place and when he had a clean shot, tried whatever effective spells he thought he could

get away with. Voldemort dodged or blocked all the spells with contemptuous ease, often in between firing his own barrage of dark curses at Harry's flitting white form.

Finally, the Dark Lord tired of the game and stood at the center of the burned out Atrium and started chain-casting at Harry, faster than the younger wizard could keep up with. Harry had read about chain-casting. He decided to work more on getting to wandless casting before he tried that. Mostly because where he'd read about it is in that book by Professor Flitwick on dueling and the Professor's observations that while chain-casting can be most effective, once a duelist develops one chain or another, he tends to rely on that to the exclusion of near everything else, which makes him predictable. And that, Flitwick warned in his book, was the one thing a duelist never wants to be.

Harry had seen this particular chain before. He'd faced Voldemort more times than he cared to mention. As such, he knew it's weakness. It was fourteen curses long, ending with the Killing Curse before starting over. After having seen Voldemort use the same spells over and over again when actually fighting with his wand, at least two times before, Harry went and found each of those curses, some even in the Hogwarts curriculum of curses, and other rarer ones in a couple books that were sequestered away at the Order's HQ, hidden away by Kreacher in the basement under the kitchen.

Alongside the descriptions of the curses themselves were the counter-spells. At least they were for those in the Hogwarts curriculum. For those from the lost and forgotten Dark Arts Tomes, he actually had to search quite a bit more and ask Sirius about them too. It took a while, but he found the counters to them. And with his rapid casting training, done so he didn't so much as have to twitch let alone touch his wand to cast the counter spells all at once, he managed to come up with the perfect defense for Voldemort's standard attack pattern.

Harry dodged the first round of the chain as quickly as he could and then in the pause after the Killing Curse went whizzing by his ear, he landed right in front of Voldemort with his wand in hand and then he just waited. The pasty white snake faced monster sneered, his red eyes flashing with rage, and then he started the chain all over again, at near point blank range.

Harry side-stepped the first spell, just to confirm it was the same chain and then countered the next and just kept countering, not so much as having to raise his wand, blocking all of Voldemort's spells the same way he had Malfoy's during his naked period.

Seeing what Harry was doing, Voldemort broke the chain and shot off an Avada Kedavra and starting it over, probably not even realizing he was doing it. Harry shifted his foot the moment he noticed the green light and a pillar shot from the floor and fused to the ceiling only a few feet in front of Voldemort, and successfully blocking the Killing Curse as soon as it was fired almost. It destroyed the pillar entirely, but it did it's job. Harry resumed blocking him with each curse, staying perfectly still, his eyes focused entirely on Voldemort's wand movement and what came out of the tip.

Suddenly the snake faced bastard stopped moving.

Harry stopped moving as well, breath held in waiting.

"Clever, Harry, very clever!" Voldemort said, mocking. "I see Dumbledore has been teaching you well."

Harry shrugged, not bothering to respond to the jibe, not that Voldemort saw it as a jibe most likely.

"Join me Harry," the Heir of Slytherin offered, "There is much still you do not know, that you have to learn. I can teach you. Show you so much more than that decrepit old fool ever would. Not could, mind you Harry. Would. He's afraid of you Harry. They all are. Just like he was afraid of me."

Harry glared into Tom Riddle's hate-filled red eyes with his Killing Curse green ones.

"With good reason," he said, and unleashed the most destructive spell he'd ever learned. He'd found it in one of those old books Kreacher had been hiding, but it wasn't a curse. It was actually an elemental spell, fusing Air, Earth, Fire and Water together to create whatever effect you wanted based on the balance of the elements you put into it. The book called it a 'Signature' spell, as no matter who cast it however many times, it would be the same elemental equation for that individual, but different people had different effects

when casting it. When Harry cast it, it was a perfect fusion of all four elements.

"Quasso Verago!" he intoned and pointed his wand, almost as an after thought, right at Riddle's head.

"WHAT?" Voldemort screamed and jumped back, only just managing to avoid the black shot of dark energy as it went through the space his head had been in half a moment before.

"Translates to," Harry explained for him, adjusting his aim, "Abyss Break!"

An even larger bolt of black energy lashed out, faster than ever. Voldemort had already Disapparated away however and the next thing Harry knew, the Dark Lord was standing over him with a dagger in hand. Harry dodged out of the way, but he was too slow to get away unscathed. The poisoned dagger managed to scratch him across the bicep.

Seeing no other alternative, Harry raised his wand and shouted into his enemy's face, "EXPELIARMUS!"

"AVADA KEDAVRA!" Voldemort screamed back.

Their wands linked and the phoenix song filled the air and the golden shield surrounded them as the beam of light from their crossed spells linked them once more. No beads of energy were coming from Voldemort's side of the connection, they were all coming from Harry's side.

"Argh!" the Dark Lord cried out. "It... it would seem... Harry... that you... have grown more... willful than... before! ARGH!" The spells cast for the last hour were coming out of Riddle's wand in a geyser of dark magic. Harry often wondered if he could bother standing here for as long as it would take for the other wand to be purged of every single spell Riddle had ever cast with it. Knowing his luck though, time would loop and they would still be connected and for all he knew that would bring Voldemort into the time loop with him, and that was just what he needed! Not!

"Hey!" Harry called, getting his enemy's attention. "Got a surprise for you!"

He pulled something out of his robes. It looked like a black and green egg from a distance, with a handle on it of all things. Harry put the frag grenade to his mouth, pulled the ring out, released the handle, and casually tossed it the five feet that separated him from the Bastard. Voldemort, idiot that he was, caught it and took a closer look at it.

Seven seconds later, they both died, but Voldemort first. Some of the fragmentary rounds caught Harry in the chest, but he was still alive when the black wraith flew out of the corpse across from him. He watched it leave, floating up to the ceiling and disappearing into the cracks it found there.

Coughing up blood as he bled out, his lungs filling with what wasn't leaving his body, he gasped to himself, voicing his last thought in this reset, "Guess... there's something... *cough* to what... Dumbledore *GASP* was saying... about those Horcruxes... after all... *cough*cough*cough*!"

"Should... probably... find... . . ." Harry's eyes glazed over, his vision gone and his last gasping breath had been exhaled with the unfinished words. It still took him another two minutes to finally reset though. Who knew bleeding out was such a slow death for the brain?

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"Ugh!" Harry cried out as he collapsed on his bed in his dorm. "There has got to be an easier way of doing this!"

Ron, who had helped Harry up the stairs and into his bed, was staring in awe of his best friend. "Harry... you just beat every Seeker IN THE WORLD! In what way is that easy in the first place?"

Harry chuckled briefly, not having the energy to do more than that. "Not what I meant Ron, and thanks for the vote of confidence since I didn't actually beat all of them, and it was just three or four Regional Teams and one International Team. Sorry that I had to humiliate the Cannons like that though, I know how much you admire them. No, what I meant by my first statement was an easier way to organize it. I'm running myself ragged Apparating all over the place just to get

them here, and then when I finally get them here, I have to spend an hour just arguing with them to get them all to show me a few tricks! There has got to be an easier way, I just haven't found it yet."

"... Harry, what are you talking about?" Ron asked, confused.

Harry shook his head, his eyes already closed and half asleep. "Nuthin'. Jus' tryin' ta figure out how ta get'em all here wit'out Apparatin' all o'er da place..." he said with a yawn.

"Apparating, yeah right," Ron almost laughed, and then did laugh as he said to his friend, "Hah! If you don't want to Apparate, why not just make a portal so you just have to walk there? Hah! Apparating already? Yeah right! You're hilarious Harry!"

Harry's eyes snapped open. He vanished from his bed with a soft crack, which quite effectively interrupted Ron's laughter.

"Er... Harry? Did you just... Apparate?" Ron asked softly before fainting dead away.

Harry reappeared, after Ward Bouncing out of Hogwarts, in Kings Cross Station in London. Silently conjuring a ball of light in the palm of his hands, he used the Lumos variation as a flashlight to find the portal to Platform Nine and Three Quarters. Once he found the appropriate pillar, he stepped through it and Streamed his way to the roof and discovered exactly where the platform was. It wasn't even in the same building as the other Platforms! It was a good quarter mile away, surrounded by trees on all sides, and judging from what he could sense from it, surrounded by some pretty powerful wards that hid the building's entire existence from all eyes!

Harry streamed back to the portal and walked through it a few times, back and forth. A quarter mile, same as stepping through a door from one room to the next. This was definitely something to look into.

Harry Disapparated back to Hogsmeade and rented a room from Rosemerta at the Three Broomsticks and collapsed on the nearest flat surface, asleep before his head hit the pillow... or the table, he wasn't sure if he'd even made it to his room.

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"Harry, we're supposed to be reviewing for the OWL this afternoon, not... why do you want to know how the portal at Nine and Three Quarters works?" Hermione interrupted herself as she looked over her friend's shoulder to see what he was studying.

"I want to figure out how to make my own portal, doesn't have to be permanent, but it would be nice," Harry answered honestly.

"Does this have something to do with getting the DA back in action?" Hermione asked, sitting down next to him.

The proverbial light bulb went on over Harry's head. "Hey, not a bad idea. Could even take the lessons to the Shrieking Shack, nobody would find us or bother us there either. Still need to figure out how it works though. Right now, all I'm finding is the history of how it was created in 1853, a year after Kings Cross Station opened, and seven months after the Hogwarts Express was made available for Muggleborns. Apparently there weren't that many Muggleborn in the Wizarding World until the 1890's. Explains why there were so many traveling magicians prior to that time period though."

"Well, if you only look in history books, that's not surprising. If you want to know the how behind it, you need to look into the Arithmancy, Rune schema, or..." she quickly sorted through the pile of books Harry had collected for himself (he had merely asked Madam Pince for all the books on the portal for Nine and Three Quarters), before pulling out a rather specific volume, slimmer than most of the rest, "... this one here. A primer on the Protean Charm. It's how I learned to make the coins. I remember that there was a reference in here about the portal..." She stopped speaking when Harry snapped the book out of her hands and started paging through it.

He spent about one second on every two pages, flipping the pages of the book every second, his eyes flitting across the text for what he was looking for. It was about a hundred and three pages in that he found the reference Hermione was talking about. "Here it is," he said, and began to read from it directly, "A more common example of a large scale protean exchange is a project that took over half a year to complete. The portal on Platform Nine and Three Quarters is a near perfect example of a spatial protean exchange, although put in rune format and powered by the ley lines rather than a simple

application of the exercises available in this tome, it remains one of the prime examples of practical use of the Protean Charm."

Harry closed the book and read the title of it, memorizing it so he could find it again in the near future. "Hermione, I need you to teach me everything you can about this charm," he said urgently.

"Why?" she crossed her arms and huffed at him.

He stood up and took her by the shoulders before leaning in and kissing her senseless. After he finally let her come up for air, he answered, "Because I'm stuck in a time loop and you hate missing out on the OWL exam, so I want to get as much in as I can this reset before having to start over. Now, Protean Charm?"

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There were seven spells to a two-way, or even a one-way portal, Harry found out after much looking into the subject. Alongside looking up ways of enchanting brooms, he delved into working out how to make his own portal system so he didn't have to Apparate everywhere. It was a lot more complicated than putting seven spells together of course, but one needed to be well-versed, if not absolute masters of all those spells in order to be even partially successful in creating stable portals.

The Protean Charm was the first step as it was a spell that allowed you to link two separate objects together as one. At its most base level, it let you make it so what happened to one object happened to the other at the same time. In the case of portals, it was what allowed for the function of what went in on one side, came out on the other.

The Portus Spell was what Professor Dumbledore had used to create a Portkey, Harry remembered. It also was not an easy spell to find in the Hogwarts Library, and was not even in the Restricted Section. Nevertheless, the reason why it was a part of making portals was that the spell attached an object to a specific location, and when activated brought the object, and anything touching the object to that location.

The Placement Charm, a spell that magically repositions something, or rather secures it to a specific location. In the case of creating portals, it secures where the entrances and exits of the portal are on both sides so that way they don't float off somewhere and you wind up having to jump through a moving portal.

The Switching Spell contributes to what the Protean and Portus spells already provide, as far as Harry could tell, but likewise he could see how being well versed in it could contribute towards portal design.

Surprisingly, he found that the last three spells one needed to be experts in was Vanishing spells, Conjuring spells, and then the last option was left open for various Protection spells, most commonly 'Muggle Protections' as the books called them. Harry just decided to label them 'Secrecy Spells' in his head.

Vanishing had only been covered this year in Transfiguration classes, and according to Professor McGonagall, was basically sending the composite matter of whatever it was you were vanishing to the void. These were her words, not his. Conjuring, by comparison, was taking free-floating matter from the void and composing it into a form of the wizard's choosing, according to the 6th and 7th Year texts he read about it. Harry therefore surmised, after a few months of study and discussing the matter with Hermione in several heated debates, that the "void" as Professor McGonagall called it was the space in which wizards Apparated through, House Elves Popped through, and quite apparently, portals sent people through when those people walked through one side and out the other. Hermione kept bringing up the word "subspace", but Harry, who still hadn't seen a full episode of Star Trek, couldn't really relate to what she was referring to.

Of course knowing all these different spells was just the basics needed before one could even start studying how to create portals. Now that he knew where to begin, however, Harry avidly pursued it without hesitation. He started by replicating Hermione's trick with the coins, and then moved on to the next example he had of the Protean charm with the mirror Sirius had given him. He wasn't really surprised when he found out that the Marauder's Map also used the Protean Charm, using the ink on the paper to match with what the wards of the castle were detecting. In the process, he also figured out how to create his own Map and even how to modify the one his

father and friends had created. He even discovered a rather... interesting way to use the charm offensively, simply by getting some part of a living person; hair, blood, whatever, and then attaching it to a representative of the person, you could practically control everything they did.

Just to try it out, and keeping in mind the ritual he unwillingly participated in the year before, Harry drew some blood from his scar and cast the Protean on a white cloth doll he'd conjured and then transfigured the cloth to dead snakeskin. He felt the charm connect and animated the doll and sent it (via Switching Spell) to the Death Room in the Department of Mysteries and had it walk in to the Veil. He got there just in time to see Voldemort walking in right alongside the doll. He rather enjoyed doing that and did it every day he had the time to set it up.

Nobody would teach him the Portus spell, not even Sirius or the Twins, although the latter strictly because they didn't know it themselves. So he held off on that for the time being. The Placement spell on the other hand was a Second Year Transfiguration spell and was more useful than you might think. What the Placement spell did, in essence, was once cast on an object, no matter what happens to that object, it will return to the very spot you placed it in, in the very condition it was when the spell was cast. As with everything, there were variations and degrees to the spell, but it was undoubtedly useful as at the very least it would guarantee you'd never lose anything important that way.

Switching spells were Third Year Transfiguration, and aside from the occasional test, before now Harry had never really considered it all that useful. He was learning otherwise, and began to experiment with the variations as he learned how to create Charm Matrices for his broom. On his learning days he didn't focus on only one single subject or one single project after all. That just got plain boring. He usually covered a multitude of subjects and tried hundreds of different experiments in learning the intricacies of the spells he was learning daily. He was still a long way from making his own portals however.

Of course this was all just spot-studying, with him just learning what he was interested in at the moment, and thus unduly focused. As such, by the time he'd finally perfected the Charm Matrix for his Seeker Broom, he'd also become a master of the Protean Charm,

Placement Charm, and could Switch anything with practically anything else imaginable. He wasn't vain enough to call himself a master of Vanishing spells, and his Conjurations were... well best not talked about at all. Reaching the point at which he could proceed no further towards his goal of creating portals, about the time he was spending his Quidditch Training days talking with the Chasers on being a Chaser, he began seeking out anyone that could teach him the Portus spell.

DOM_ _ _ _ _
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The moment Harry woke up as his alarm clock went off at 7 o'clock, he Disapparated straight out of his bed, the crack of displaced air actually lost in the sound of Ron's "displaced air". He Apparated onto the doorstep of Number Twelve Grimmauld Place in downtown London with a noise typically associated with very large and very loud aircraft as a sonic boom that shattered glass all over the neighborhood and probably several streets away as well rocked the area. It was, however, the side-effect of all the wards around Grimmauld Place coming down at the feet of the boy that had appeared there. Though it was entirely unnecessary, he politely knocked on the door and then waited precisely ten seconds, before knocking once more. This time he waited thirty seconds and knocked a third time. Three heartbeats after knocking, he held his hand flat against the door and blew it inwards, bringing a shield into place before the door was even fully destroyed.

A dozen spells of varying degrees of lethality splashed against his shield the moment he stepped through the open doorway and this time, rather than wait for them all to recognize him, he simply pulled out his wand and stunned the lot of them with a Stupefy Maximus. Stepping over the bodies, he made his way to the kitchen and kept his Protego going at full strength. It would definitely stop any and all Memory spells.

"H-Har-Harry?" Dumbledore stuttered, surprise overcoming his composure for a brief moment. "What are you doing here? You should be at Hogwarts."

Without being invited, Harry sat at the opposing end of the kitchen table and used his wand to seal every possible exit from the room. Then he went a step further and whispered a name, summoning the

Minor Spirit of Fire. Conversing through their shared power of fire, Harry merely asked that the Spirit prevent Fawkes from coming to Dumbledore's aid, and that if he did come, then as payment the Minor Spirit could do whatever it wanted to the phoenix. If the phoenix did not come, then the Spirit would take as payment the honor of informing the Major Spirit that Fawkes had indeed learned his lesson.

"Harry?" Dumbledore asked again, after seeing Harry seal the room. He wasn't paying close enough attention to notice the arrival of the Minor Spirit of Fire, nor the sudden protections that would prevent his familiar from coming to his rescue. "What is the meaning of this?" Dumbledore began to suspect that it was not Harry Potter sat before him, and cautiously gripped the Elder Wand more tightly.

"I want you to teach me how to make Portkeys," Harry finally spoke, "More specifically, I want you to teach me the Portus spell and everything associated with it. All of it's variations."

Dumbledore frowned beneath his beard and made to stand up. Harry tapped his wand to the table between them and it disappeared at the same moment, vanished. Dumbledore settled back in his seat. The table reappeared without Harry so much as twitching his wand.

"Who are you?" Dumbledore's voice was hard as ice.

"I'm stuck in a time loop," Harry sighed, pocketing his wand. "I know how many times you've Obliviated me, at least all the times you'll cop to. I know the contents of the Prophecy. I know where it is and how to get to it. I know Snape is playing both sides, but his ultimate loyalty lies with you as you've almost literally got him by the balls, whereas Voldemort would just kill him. You lost my loyalty a long time ago in my eyes, Dumbledore, so stop pretending. I need to know the Portus spell so I can start learning about magic portals. Although... hm... I suppose it would be useful to turn all the DA's coins into Portkeys so that when I choose to actually walk in to Voldemort's trap, they have a way out instead of being killed. Again. I also can Apparate and have found a way to Ward Bounce to the Headmaster's Access in Hogwarts. It's how I got here some..." he paused to look at the clock, "...seven minutes after the time loop starts. It's also why all your wards failed as of six minutes ago. You did catch the part where I said I am stuck in a time loop?"

Dumbledore frowned and let out a long suffering sigh.

"I don't trust you anymore Dumbledore," Harry told him in very unfriendly terms. "The shield I have up is not going to be dropped anytime soon, so you can just forget all thoughts of Obliviating me, if you'll pardon the pun. You'll also notice I sealed every possible exit, so you are not going anywhere any time soon. Now, teach me the Portus spell."

"Every possible exit, you say?" Dumbledore repeated, his eyes twinkling with mischief. "FAWKES!" he called holding his hands up, as he had when he'd escaped his office after the New Year.

When nothing happened, Harry smiled briefly and answered dryly, "Every possible exit."

"Even that of what it is you are asking me to teach you?" Dumbledore then held up a sock he'd pulled from his pocket.

Harry tilted his head and asked him point blank, "Are you sure you want to use that? To refuse to teach me so simple a request, even after all the proof I've given you about what is happening to me?"

Dumbledore hesitated, his frown deepening.

"The boy you knew is gone. He grew up a long, long time ago. And he's not coming back. You now only have the, albeit young, man he grew into to deal with. I'll freely admit, this is only the sixth time I've approached you. If it makes you feel better, the other times I was far more... polite than I've been. You either blew me off, or when I cornered you, escaped somehow. I have lost patience with doing things the nice way. Either teach me here and now what I want to know, or know for the rest of the day that I will never ever come to you again for anything. Hm... wonder if Moody would be willing to teach me a few things? Probably would if I could show him some neat ways of keeping himself from being surprised in the future."

Dumbledore frowned, all his wrinkles deeper and more pronounced than they had ever been before, making him look far older than he actually was, which was quite a feat in itself. Sitting back in his chair, the old wizard surrendered to the inevitable and began to lecture in his most monotone and emotionless voice, sticking strictly to the bare bones facts of what it was that Harry wanted to know. Harry

listened intently and when Dumbledore finished speaking, he asked a question.

Surprised at the rather intelligent and a bit too well informed question from someone so physically younger than him, Dumbledore answered as dispassionately as it was possible to in the English language. Harry nodded and then asked another three questions. And as much as he didn't want to, Dumbledore couldn't help but feel a small swell of pride deep in his soul at how intelligent Harry was showing himself to be. And so it continued for the next few hours. Harry would ask questions and Dumbledore would answer them as straight-laced as he could, which became more difficult with each of Harry's increasingly insightful questions.

It wasn't until nearly lunch time that Dumbledore was the one to suggest Harry trying his hand at creating a Portkey. Perhaps just one of the old or broken dishes, going to Privet Drive, just as a test run. Harry succeeded on his first attempt, with the old clay pot disappearing as soon as the Portus spell was cast. A few moments to Disapparate to confirm it had gone where he had sent it, and Harry returned with the transported dish. Scaring the crap out of his Aunt and Uncle was just a nice bonus to it he figured.

Some more experimentation under Dumbledore's expertise had Harry creating touch-based Portkeys, time-delayed Portkeys, and even command Portkeys. After that, the only thing he could learn, Dumbledore assured him, could be discovered through experimentation and exploration. Harry was quite certain that creating Portkeys that went past wards was one such experiment that Dumbledore thought he might stumble into. Thus, as the day began to wane, Harry constructed a new Portkey, this one with an Analysis spell attached via Protean Charm that would write the results on a charmed pen and paper-filled notebook. He tossed the contact-based Portkey at the Headmaster, where it hit the old man's chest before he knew what had happened and both disappeared the moment after. The pen was alive with detailed notes on Arithmancy and Runes and biological statistics that none of which made any sense to Harry, but it was likewise clear to Harry that the Headmaster and the Portkey he'd made had passed through Hogwarts Wards, meaning that even if it was created by someone else, so long as it was the recognized Headmaster passing through the wards, the Portkey had Headmaster Access.

Harry spent the rest of the night locked away in the Grimmauld kitchen, pouring over those notes, trying to find some way of replicating the success without having the Headmaster along for the ride. If he could figure that out, he could start constructing his Portkeys accordingly and wouldn't have to worry about sneaking past Umbridge and all her security measures. Unfortunately, all of the advanced Arithmantical data and Runes may as well have been Greek to him. He still had a lot to learn.

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Not wanting to give up, Harry pulled the same trick on the Headmaster, only he got Hedwig to deliver the Porkey for him rather than going in person, and once the notes had finished compiling, (the Headmaster had appeared in his throne in the midst of breakfast, right on top of Umbridge's lap), he took them to Hermione and had her look over them and explain them to him. She freely admitted that it was all far too advanced for her, but what she could puzzle out about it did help him a great deal. At least he could finally start to recognize what was what, even if he had yet to comprehend what it all meant.

After that, he started taking the notes to various people that he hoped had a chance of interpreting them so he could maybe start to further modify how he created his Portkeys. He started with the Arithmancy Professor, saying that the notes were in relation to what had happened with the Headmaster and he needed her help.

He almost regretted doing that as she immediately took it upon herself to start giving Harry lessons in Arithmancy on the spot. After suffering through the unasked for math lessons, he almost dropped the whole thing if not that when he took another look at the notes, some of what Professor Vector had lectured about stuck with him and it all started to make sense. Not enough to interpret, but enough that he could read the equations there. He went back to her and this time actually asked for the lessons. She kicked him out and tore up the notes in front of him before throwing them into the fireplace.

The next reset, after he'd cooled down quite a bit, he went back to her the same as he had the first time, saying only the notes had something to do with the Headmaster's appearance (and subsequent arrest) and that he needed her help with the notes. The

lecture was the same, but this time Harry knew enough to ask the right questions for proper clarification. Less suspicious of his motives, she taught him a bit more than she probably intended and explained in detail what all of the Arithmancy on the notes meant and how it could be interpreted. He tried only once more to get her to teach him Arithmancy (without the Headmaster being arrested this time around), but she still denied him, although she was much kinder about it when he approached her without an ulterior motive.

He repeated the Reset where she would actually teach him something a few more times until he was confident he could properly interpret the Arithmancy portion of the notes about the Portkey. Now, he turned towards the Ancient Runes Professor, after getting Hermione to at least tell him what each rune meant (teaching him the alphabet in other words). He used the same excuse he had with Professor Vector. And in a similar vein, Professor Babbling took the time to lecture him on the generalities behind what he was showing her. She didn't go into the basics like Professor Vector did, which made him grateful he'd had the foresight to get Hermione to do so, but instead explained the relationships between the runes and why it was they fit together in the pattern they did and what the Analysis spell's results meant in cut and dry terms. She didn't even take a look at the Arithmancy side of things, for which Harry was grateful as that part made it clear it was dealing with a Portus spell, whereas the Runes portion merely told her that they were dealing with Hogwarts wards. Right about the time he came back from taking his OWL (none of the Professors would help him if he skipped it), she revealed she'd been studying Hogwarts wards for her entire career and even 'secretly' showed him some of her work in that regard.

Right off the bat, just looking at some of what she had written down, he saw familiar patterns, patterns that he'd encountered personally when he Ward Bounced all over Hogwarts. He pointed out those patterns to her and offered some suggestions as it was clear from her notes that she hadn't made the connections between some of the things he knew from experience were in fact connected. Watching her work as she took his suggestions, he learned just as much as from her lecturing about the subject to him. Perhaps even more, as she was working at a level several degrees removed from what was generally taught at Hogwarts.

After burning out all his obvious choices, Harry cast about for anyone else that may help him in figuring out how to modify his

Portkey-making. One Reset, after Dumbledore had appeared in the Slytherin girls dorm room, while most of them were undressed or dressing, as Harry was showing Hermione the pages of notes and explaining what they were, although all he ever said was that he thought it had something to do with Dumbledore appearing out of nowhere at Hogwarts, Ron just happened to be nearby and commented that his brother Bill might be able to help. When asked why, their redheaded friend merely replied that he'd seen some of Bill's papers from his job as a Cursebreaker and they all looked just like that. Harry left the Castle and went to the Order's HQ immediately and more or less kidnapped Bill right out from under Molly's nose.

Of course Bill was cool, and the last he'd heard, Harry was a loyal and avid supporter of the Order and Dumbledore, and had recently lead a group of students in creating "Dumbledore's Army" at Hogwarts, and he'd come to him with vital and key information about how Dumbledore had disappeared from under the Order's protection and wound up back at Hogwarts. Working together, over the course of several resets, Bill helped Harry in interpreting and understanding the results of the Headmaster going through Hogwarts wards with a Portkey not made by the Headmaster in the first place. It turned out, they discovered, Hogwarts wards were keyed into the magical signature of the Headmaster himself. A little bit more time to interpret some of the more obscure portions of the data retrieved revealed this signature was identified via blood. Which meant that Hogwarts had Blood Wards.

That revelation almost always stunned Bill into shocked silence. He was doubly shocked when Harry revealed the Headmaster had also installed Blood Wards over Privet Drive, so Harry didn't often tell him that. When he finally came out of the stupor, Harry listened patiently as he explained why it was a shock. Blood Wards could only be initiated through human sacrifice. When Harry asked if the wards had to be set up before the sacrifice or after, Bill's answer of, "Within twenty-four hours of the sacrifice itself, it can be either before or after, but it must be within a day," he was half-relieved and half-worried every time. It was a good chance that Dumbledore had taken a day to set up the wards after Lily's sacrifice, but it was nevertheless concerning that there was an equal chance he'd already had the wards set up and had just been waiting for it to happen.

Some more investigation, both into the notes and into Hogwarts' history, revealed that every Headmaster was keyed into the Blood Wards of Hogwarts, and it was a simple ritual done at the Heart of Hogwarts involving the Sorting Hat and something else of the Founders, though the books never said. Having never heard of the Heart of Hogwarts before, neither knew where to look for it. Except Harry.

He went straight to the Room of Requirement the very next morning and focused on the Heart of Hogwarts and what it is he wanted to do.

Nothing happened. The Room did not appear.

Frowning, Harry said to himself, "This could be a problem."

DOM_ _ _ _ _
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Harry Apparated into the Atrium right after the last Ministry Worker had Flooed home for the day. As he passed all the Floo Fireplaces, he sealed them up by calling upon the Earth element and bending the ground and stone to blocking off all the entrances. The guard to the Atrium had also gone home for the day, so Harry merely lay traps wherever he liked. They were the usual sort for this kind of thing.

Once he was past the Atrium, he used the Fire element to burn away and cut all the supports to all the lifts save for the one he was using, taking it to the Department of Mysteries. Once there, he stepped out of the lift just as it fell to crash amongst the others. Coming down the shafts behind him was all the water from the Atrium fountain, flowing in streams and coalescing into a number of medium sized water spheres around him. Likewise, a nearly visible sphere of wind formed around his body, forming a shield around which the water spheres orbited. As he passed each candle, the flames jumped from where they were to a ring of fire that continuously grew around Harry's waist, just outside the air shield. With each step he took, the stones all around quivered, anxious to help the one that could call upon them at a moment's notice.

By the time he made it to the spinning room, he didn't bother shutting the doors at all, instead, leaving a rather large pile of dungbombs in the middle of the room right next to a rather specially

designed Weasley Firework. He went straight through the Hall of Offices, setting up a few more delayed spells here and there, before finally getting to the door to the Hall of Prophecies. He casually strolled down the rows until he got to Row 97 and barely pausing, he grabbed the prophecy with his name on it and kept right on strolling along.

"Stop right there, Potter," Lucius Malfoy's voice snapped out from the darkness. Harry didn't bother stopping and even started to whistle as he strolled down the hall, but one of the water spheres reacted quite violently to Malfoy's threat.

The water sphere flew through the air and lashed out with three water tendrils into the dark. There were a number of screams, one of which was Malfoy's.

"KILL HIM!" Bellatrix's crazed voice screamed out.

Harry continued to stroll along, though perhaps at a slightly more brisk pace than before, as the remaining water spheres lashed out at the group of Death Eaters, and the ring of fire joining them, increasing its size, heat and becoming a solid disc of flame to act as a shield between the Death Eater's and Harry's position. The air shield remained in place around his body. All the Death Eaters were casting lethal spells, but it did little good against water tendrils and a wall of fire. If they tried to put out the fire with Aquamenti, the water was immediately absorbed by one or all of the spheres, making them bigger, and the same happened if they tried to incinerate or boil away the water, as the fire wall absorbed any and all fire-based spells and grew larger and hotter from it all. As such, Harry barely had to worry about any of those lethal spells coming his way, and the few that got through to him splashed harmlessly against his air shield.

"POTTER!" Malfoy screamed. "YOU WON'T GET AWAY WITH THIS!"

Harry paused at the door back to the Hall of Offices, and turned back to respond. "You sound like that pathetic offspring you call a son, Malfoy. Of course I'm going to get away with it. The question now is whether or not when I take out Voldemort if I go down with him, but hopefully not. There is no longer any question about your fates. Just my own. I suppose I'll get to find out, but you won't." With

that said, he turned and walked through the door, shutting it behind him.

As soon as the sound of the door shutting finished echoing amongst all the fighting, at the same time the wall of fire went out and all the water dropped to the ground, nothing more than water. Surprised at the sudden change, the Death Eaters just stood there for a moment, trying to catch their collective breath. As such, some of them could actually hear the sub-audible rumbling that had started all around them. It wasn't a sound, so much an overwhelming vibration that they all felt to the core of their bones. Suddenly, there was a crashing sound and a pillar fell down from ceiling, crushing one of masked wizards where he stood.

"What? What was that? What is that?" Bellatrix suddenly screamed, going up to the pillar and touching it. Aside from the red stains starting at the bottom, it was a perfectly smooth square pillar of solid rock, looking to them all as though it had actually been carved straight from the rock when the room had been first constructed.

"How did... no, it can't be..." Malfoy muttered in mounting shock.

"What? What, Malfoy?" Bellatrix screamed into the man's face. "What is it?"

"Potter did this," Malfoy answered, "Somehow, I don't know how, Potter did this. He... he was controlling the water, and then the flame, and now... this? Potter is using Elemental Magic!"

"What? No! Impossible! Only the Dark Lord could...! What? Huh?" all the other Death Eaters started shouting at once.

"SHUT UP!" Bellatrix screamed, right as another crashing sound echoed out and if the man hadn't jumped out of the way in time, he might have found himself similarly smeared against the ceiling as the floor tile beneath his feet had shifted and then rocketed to the ceiling the same as the other spire had crashed to the floor. "What is this, Malfoy?"

"Earth magic," Malfoy whimpered right as the ground, all the stone tiles beneath their feet began to shake and rumble like there was an earthquake going on. Above their heads, some of them also noticed the stone tiles on the ceiling were also shaking and rumbling.

"MERC—*!" Malfoy's scream was cut off as both the ceiling and floor shot towards one another like a trap closing its teeth, crushing everything between floor and ceiling in the Hall of Prophecies down into a finely ground paste.

At the end of the Hall of Offices, Harry sat patiently as he listened to the prophecy given by Trelawney again and again, waiting for Voldemort to show up. The monster, as always, knew the moment his trap had failed, each and every time, and was there within minutes with his remaining forces. Not out of any sort of vengeance or justice for their deaths, but because if he lost the entire attack force he'd committed to this one operation all at once, he believed that Dumbledore had brought some serious heavy hitters to stop them and thus he would need everything he currently had to come out ahead. Thankfully after doing this a few times, Harry had learned what dark creatures were Voldemort's first choice and had laid his traps appropriately. Chocolate coating on every place the Dementors could get into, as well as a fog machine just inside those entrances. Silver nitrate explosives for the werewolves and vampires, and some Mother's Milk baths for the trolls and Holy Water for the gremlins. And some incendiary devices for everything else.

Listening to the prophecy over and over again, Harry thought he might find some new gleam of information, some new interpretation that wasn't the same Dumbledore had obviously come to. Unfortunately, no such revelation was forthcoming, no matter how many times he listened to the recording.

Harry was broken out of his musings when there was a loud explosion at the other end of the Hall, and a pungent stench drifted along after it. Grinning, in spite of the smell, Harry said to himself, "Showtime."

Standing to his feet, he stepped on the glass ball, destroying the prophecy and then held his arms out wide. "Incendio," he whispered, and then drew the sparks from the tip of his wand to between his spread hands and then poured his magic into the fire until it grew, and grew and pretty soon he was holding an inferno between his outstretched hands. Beads of sweat trickled down his face and neck, as he focused his concentration more intensely than he ever had before. Taking a shallow breath, he then pushed the inferno ball down the hall, until it was practically flying towards the open doorway at the end to the spinning room, lighting everything aflame

in it's passing. Once the giant fireball was on its way, Harry took a deeper breath, and then tapping into his Air magic, blew a strong supporting wind to fuel the fire he'd just started at the heart of the Ministry of Magic. Where it was an inferno before, it quickly became a blaze of hellfire straight from the Pit!

Walking along the path of destruction, Harry gathered around his waist another ring of fire and reapplied the spherical air shield around his body as he walked along, until he came to the door leading to the Death Room from the Hall of Offices. Opening the door and walking through, he pulled out his wand and shot his Patronus, silently, down the hall towards where the Dementors were no doubt gathering. He then walked over and stood on the back side of the platform where the Veil stood from where the entrance to the room was.

"POTTER!" Voldemort screamed the moment he was in the room. "You will pay for all of this!"

"Are you kidding?" Harry laughed from behind the Veil, "I can't afford what the Ministry is going to charge for these damages! I'd be broke before they even got to the Hall of Prophecies, let alone all the fire damage and that mess you made in the entry room. I think I'll blame you instead and you can pay for all of it."

"Give me the prophecy," Voldemort hissed, stepping up on the other side of the platform, glaring at Harry through the fluttering Veil.

"Come get it," was Harry's reply, as he then changed into his White Worm Serpent animagus form and dove through the Veil straight at Voldemort. The Immortal creature was not even remotely affected by the Veil's death magic and had wrapped itself around Voldemort in less than a blink of an eye. He then changed directly into his most reliable dinosaur form, the Velociraptor, and immediately grabbed hold of the Dark Lord's wand hand began to chew it off.

"What do you think you are doing?" Voldemort hissed at the reptilian monster, it's jaws wrapped tightly around his wand arm so he couldn't even think of casting a spell with his phoenix core wand.

"Wot doeth it uhk ike Mm doin, Hom?" Harry hissed back in the same language, speaking more from the throat with a heavy accent, and slurring slightly since he didn't dare open his mouth. "Mm tryin

to ill ooo! Ow rop da ahnd al-eddie, ooo ugee HSSSHHHSSP!" Harry still didn't know what the word translated to in English, but it was obviously a pretty heinous insult in the language of the snakes, and he loved the look on Voldemort's face when he was called that.

Voldemort then hissed a word that Harry now knew was the Parseltongue pronunciation of the Banishing Charm, and suddenly Harry found his dinosaur body being shoved away from Voldemort like he'd been hit with a banishing spell. He didn't let go until he felt that his jaw might very well give way before Voldemort's arm would. Unfortunately, his opponent was more worried about his arm and while he did drop his wand, he still barely caught it with his off hand. Knowing he didn't want to deal with any spell his enemy could properly focus, Harry let go and let the banishing spell do its work, flying back. Mid-air, he changed into his Chupacabra form and vanished into the shadows, he had no other form that could hide as well as this one. Once there, he resumed human form and took a few moments to catch his breath.

As he was healing his arm with the rudimentary healing he knew, Voldemort was cursing up a storm, threatening everyone Harry ever cared about, but Harry was ignoring him, and keeping his Occlumency at full effort, while trying to figure out what to do next. There were a few other Animagus forms that he could try, but Voldemort was an absolute expert when it came to magical creatures, and he had some way of dealing with whatever he changed into, some almost before he could actually do anything. Time to try his other ace.

Sticking his hand into the stone floor, Harry connected with the Earth and soon had the chamber collapsing all around Voldemort, throwing and dropping rocks on him. Unfortunately, because of the Veil, he couldn't do the same crushing trick he had in the Hall of Prophecies, but the flying projectiles seemed to be doing well, as even the ones that Voldemort managed to atomize with powerful curses, the dust and fragments still threw themselves at the Dark Lord, cutting him at every opportunity.

When Voldemort conjured that Slytherin Shield of his that he only used when on the ropes, it was time to take it up a notch. Taking a breath, Harry then reached out with his other hand and suddenly all of the torches ringing the room lit up brighter than ever, all a bright flaming blue, the hottest a flame can be before turning white.

Without going out, or leaving their torches, the flames all sent a continuous barrage of yellow-blue fireballs at Voldemort, who was still near the center of the room. Taking a deep breath, and focusing harder than he ever had before, Harry breathed out with his ice-breath. The first couple times all he got was a couple of brief fog-clouds that dissipated before doing anything, but soon he had the hang of it and soon enough the very air and everything around the room was frosting over faster than even the Dementors could do it. That should keep Voldemort from trying the same trick again, he thought and resumed his focus on his other attacks.

The assault of Earth and Fire continued for several more minutes before the victim of said assault finally lost the last vestiges of patience, and dropped his shield and was suddenly unleashing full strength blasting curses at everything around the room. It had been recommended by Professor Flitwick to never cast back-to-back blasting curses, no matter what the circumstances. Mostly so you don't go deaf from repeated point-blank explosions, but also because collateral damage would be extensive. There was also, he'd warned, a possibility for an extremely dangerous magical side-effect that was known as a 'Cumulative Potential Energy Explosion'.

Seeing what was going to happen, Harry could not believe his enemy was that stupid.

"Damnit!" Harry near-silently cursed, as he set the elemental attacks to continue, despite his absence and then he got the hell out of Pompeii. The echo of the crack from Harry's Disapparation was next to nothing compared to the explosion that ripped apart the Death Room, save for the Veil. Harry didn't believe for a second that he was lucky enough for Voldemort to have killed himself that way. The man was intelligent enough to know what effect he was creating with all those blasting curses and would undoubtedly already had protections in place to keep it from affecting him.

Back in the Atrium, having learned by now to appear in his Ifrit form and start with the unending fire thus taking out all of Voldemort's dark creature army, Harry sat down on the edge of the dried out fountain and considered his other options. Running away was still one of those options, obviously, as was getting the Order and the Ministry involved, all he had to do was unseal all the Floo access points and people would start streaming in of course. But still...

Even after all this time, all that he had learned, all that he could do, he still couldn't beat Voldemort without going down along with the snake bastard. Well... There was one way, he thought as he pulled out the white cloth doll. Sighing, Harry reached up, and with a very tiny application of wind magic to his finger tip, he reopened his scar, gathered a couple of drops of blood, and put them inside the doll, and then cast the Protean charm on it. Before he could do anything though, Voldemort appeared right in front of him amidst a stream of black magic. Harry smiled at him and then flicked his finger against the doll's head. Voldemort's head snapped back, like he'd been punched.

"What?" Voldemort hissed, looking down at Harry with pure malice. Harry balled up his fist and paused only long enough to give his enemy a mischief-filled smile, and punched the doll in the middle a few times. Voldemort was knocked back with each blow, and on the last one, they both heard several snaps and cracks, similar to what one heard when breaking twigs or branches in the forest. Only they came from Voldemort's chest.

"H-h-how?" Riddle moaned from where he lay.

"Really shouldn't have used my blood for that body restoration ritual of yours. Makes it real easy for me to apply the Protean charm in order to affect you directly," Harry answered easily. As soon as he finished speaking, the doll flew out of his hand and into Voldemort's.

"Now you cannot...ARGH!" Voldemort started to say, only to end in a scream as the doll caught fire in his hand, and his whole body a few moments later. Water erupted from hidden pipes and poured through the walls, and came from Voldemort's own wand like an oncoming flood, quickly dousing the flames before too much damage could be done. Enough to leave him with more than a few burn scars however.

Harry had Disapparated again before Voldemort was aware of anything but his own pain, this time to the level where the Department of Magical Law Enforcement was located, specifically the cell they usually put him in for interrogation purposes. It had happened enough that he'd taken the time to ask his guard a few questions here and there about the cell. For instance, that they were all individually warded for Anti-Apparation and Anti-Portkey, and could be sealed into total lockdown so nothing, not even a ghost

could get through. And all it took was flipping a switch on the outside of the cell.

After Apparating in, Harry then changed into his Athene Owl form and 'flashed' into the hall just outside the cell. Once he saw the tell-tale tendril of dark magic go through the door, Harry flipped the switch and smiled as the cell went into lockdown. Unfortunately, so did all the other cells on the block, and shortly after the entire hallway was sealed off from the rest of the Ministry. Frowning at that unusual predicament, Harry then changed into a Mountain Gnome and then quietly burrowed his way through the floor to the level below, which just so happened to be the Department of Mysteries, specifically the Hall of Offices.

Changing back once he was safely on the ground, he made his way out of the Department of Mysteries, blasting whatever Trolls or werewolves he came across with fireballs, and blowing the Dementors away with a combination of his Patronus and a few wind attacks. He even went back through a few other rooms, just to make sure he hadn't missed any of them. By the time he made it back to the Spinning Room, Voldemort was there waiting for him. Or rather, was waiting for him just outside the Spinning room, as neither one of them wanted to walk through that mess any time soon.

"Clever, Harry, very clever!" Voldemort called through the open doors. "I see Dumbledore has been teaching you well."

Harry shrugged, not bothering to respond to the jibe, not that Voldemort saw it as a jibe most likely.

"However will you entertain me next, I wonder!" Voldemort called. "Oh wait, who said it had to be you? Bring her, Wormtail!"

"No! Let me go!" a girl's voice screamed.

Harry froze. His fists unconsciously clenched, and his teeth bared themselves. That was Hermione's voice!

"Call for him, my dear, call for your saviour," Voldemort's voice hissed. Harry's teeth ground together, his jaw was clenched tight, and his pupils had contracted to pinpoints.

"Harry? Harry! Don't come! It's a trap! It's a, aahhh!" Hermione called, and then cried out as the sound of a slap reached Harry's ears.

"Stupid girl! Come out Potter, or the girls all die!" Voldemort threatened.

Harry Disapparated.

The Ministry's wards collapsed as every one of the girls from Gryffindor House were taken one by one, but so quickly it may as well have been simultaneously, from the grips of their captors to Grimmauld Place (the street, not the building), and then in the aftermath it was just Harry standing there amidst all the Death Eaters.

"You all," he croaked, his voice thick from emotion, "DIE!"

And then there was a Nine Tailed Fox among them, unleashing its full magical potential all at once. The Four Elements responded to his thoughts like they were just another part of his body. but more than just Earth, Fire, Wind and Water. There was Lightning, Ice, Magma, Light and the Void. All bottled up in a small red-furred bundle of raw fury. Voldemort had it collared and its tails tied down in a matter of seconds, but by then he'd lost a third of his remaining forces. Harry then changed to his Two Tailed Cat form and howled. Suddenly all the Dementors were attacking and obeying the commands of the one creature that controlled the Dead and Undead more effectively than the most powerful Necromancer known to exist. More than half of the remaining Death Eaters were Kissed by the Dementors before Voldemort managed to put a muzzle on the cat and commanded the Dementors to leave entirely.

While he was busy with the Dementors, Harry changed to his dragon form and when Voldemort turned back to face him, he was already hitting him point blank with a bolt of blue flame. Harry changed back to the White Worm Snake before the retaliatory Death Curse struck, and wasn't even fazed as he slithered along and then latched itself all over Voldemort's burning form yet again. This time, however, instead of changing into an Anaconda or dinosaur, he went to the one Magical Transformation he'd been rather... hesitant about. His Tentacle Demon form.

However, that form was stronger by far than all of his others, at least in terms of physical strength, and the tentacles actually made it easier to rip Voldemort and then all of the remaining Dark Creatures and Death Eaters limb from limb. The real reason he really didn't like using this form though were the odd instincts that came with it, and as soon as he was sure he'd gotten them all, he changed back to human form, oddly devoid of blood in a room that was full of it.

Coming down from his fury-inspired adrenaline rush, Harry grasped his knees and tried to get his breathing under control. Out of the corner of his eye, though, he saw a familiar sight. Keeping his Occlumency to full strength, he summoned forth the Air Shield just in time to block the wraith of black smoke coming from Voldemort's dismembered corpse. Still protected by his shield, Harry watched as Voldemort's snake-like face formed out of the black mist of the wraith, glaring hatefully at him with no eyes and no true face.

"You may think you've won, for now, Potter! But I shall return again! For I am Lord Voldemort, I am immortal and none can defeat me!" spoke the wraith, and with that having been said, it shot to the roof and disappeared into the cracks of the ceiling.

Harry let out a sigh of relief, but remained standing and kept his shield up. There was no telling if the monster was truly gone, and besides he didn't want to get his clothes messed up by all the filthy blood pooling at his feet.

He Disapparated to the edge of the Forbidden Forest that was closest to the Quidditch Pitch at Hogwarts and silently made his way to the showers in the locker room and then washed himself clean of everything that had stained him since earlier this evening. Checking the time, he laughed when he realized he was actually just in time for supper in the Great Hall.

Getting dressed, he stared at his face in the mirror and asked himself, "What's this make now? Seven? Twenty? Nearly a hundred times that I've actually managed to kill him? But he still escapes as a Wraith. Guess there's something to what Dumbledore was saying about those Horcruxes." Harry sighed and ran his hand through his still drying hair. "Well, at least this time I managed to stay alive after I took him out. Now I've just got to track down who kidnapped all the girls in Gryffindor for him and delivered them to Wormtail..."

"Speaking of which," he suddenly remembered as he walked out of the locker room, Disapparating before he was fully out the door.

Apparating to the roof of the Order's HQ, he saw that Dumbledore and the Order already had things well in hand and were getting all the students back to Hogwarts as quickly as they could. Seeing that, Harry returned to Hogwarts, walking into the Great Hall right behind the Minister of Magic, who was surrounded by Aurors and was quite nearly assaulting Umbridge with spittle and sweat.

"Hey Ron, what's going on?" Harry asked as he took his seat next to his friend.

"Harry! Where have you been? You've missed loads! Hey, you seen Hermione? She disappeared after Professor Snape and the Inquisitorial Squad came to the Common Room half an hour ago."

Well, that answered that, Harry mused.

"I'm sure she's fine. And I've been with..." Harry hesitantly lied to his friend, "Well, I've been with Hagrid's brother Grawp. You remember me and Hermione telling you about him, right? I figured it was time we spent some time with him, what with Hagrid having been run off last night, so I went right after OWLs. I just got back." Luna had been working with him on his 'tell' recently, so he was more sure of his ability to lie now than he had been before. It helped that it was also one that he'd told both Hermione and Ron on several occasions when he suddenly showed up after interesting things happened during various resets.

"THE WHOLE MINSITRY IS IN RUINS!" the Minister suddenly shouted, louder than he'd intended to obviously, as the whole hall went quiet and all eyes were on him and Umbridge. An idea suddenly occurred to Harry, and he couldn't help grinning. So he might have just lied to Ron for nothing, but he couldn't miss an opportunity to prank the Minister and Umbridge at once. Prank, vengeance, same thing really.

"What do you think that's about?" Harry asked, his voice carrying in the quiet.

"Potter? What is Harry Potter doing here? You told me that he wasn't here! That's why I brought the Aurors, so we could start hunting him down!" Fudge whined to Umbridge.

"I was helping Hagrid with a project that he asked my assistance with, before he was removed from his position as a Professor, if everyone must know," Harry stood up to speak. "So the Ministry has fallen? Good thing Voldemort is dead then." He then sat back down beside Ron.

"Harry? What are you saying? You-Know-Who is still out there, isn't he? You said it yourself, didn't you?" asked Ron.

"Well... dead again, then," Harry corrected himself. "Is it time to eat yet? I'm starving here."

"Since when?" the redhead exclaimed.

Harry checked the time and answered, "Since... oh, about twenty-three minutes ago."

Everybody, Fudge and Umbridge included, did a double-take. That was when Harry noticed that most of the Inquisitorial Squad and Snape especially were missing. Out loud, he questioned, "I wonder where Professor Snape and Malfoy are at? And since when is Gryffindor an all-guy house?"

"Harry..." Ron started to say, but was interrupted when Fudge screamed out.

"AURORS! Arrest Potter! On suspicion of High Treason!"

Harry Disapparated with a loud crack and reappeared in front of Fudge and Umbridge. He then changed into his dragon form, standing on his hind legs so he was a good nine feet tall. His green, slitted eyes stared down the both of them, and slowly he moved his mouth, using the muscles in unfamiliar ways for the dragon form, into a wide open smile. And then he bared his fangs. They both screamed and Fudge fainted dead away. Harry changed back to human and turned to face the Aurors. He reported, "Just outside the entrance to the Department of Mysteries, you'll find a crime scene and the remains of Voldemort's body and most likely Professor Snape and a few of the Inquisitorial Squad members that are

missing. I did it. Sorry about lying to you Ron!" he called to his friend with a wave.

"N-no problem," answered Ron. "I-I un-under-understand... I think!"

"Why tell us?" the Auror closest asked him.

"If I'm going to be arrested either way, I'd rather it be for the right reasons," he shrugged.

"... You could kill every one of us, couldn't you?" the same Auror asked after a tense moment or three.

Harry just shrugged again, "Could. Won't. Doesn't mean I'll just let you arrest me, but you don't have to worry about me going lethal on you."

"Bloody hell!" another of the Auror's wiped the sweat from his brow, and a few others were soon in need of doing the same.

"Potter! I'll have you arrested for—eep!" Umbridge started to shout, but quieted when Harry turned and glared at her. He held the stare for the longest time, and then just sniffed and turned away from her. Eyes wide with rage at the casual dismissal, Umbridge saw red, and turned it as well. Her face flushed and her cheeks blowing out with rage, she raised her wand and aimed it at Harry's back, and began to cast, "CRUC—*!"

Before the first syllable had left her lips, Harry had already Disapparated, and Apparated in behind her and then severed her head from her neck with an air blade. As her body, and head, fell the Aurors and students all saw Harry standing there with his hands bare and standing there without a drop of blood on him. So fine was the cut that the blood didn't leave the body until the head fell off as the body fell forward. Raising his hands in surrender, "You all saw that right? It was self-defense, and she was about to use an Unforgivable on me!"

"Uh, right, I saw it that way, right guys?" the same Auror that had first spoken was nodding his head. Soon they were all nodding their heads and making agreeing sounds.

"Harry!" Hermione's voice suddenly called out from the doors of the Great Hall. Her and all the kidnapped girls behind her suddenly raced forward, only to come up short of seeing Harry standing above a decapitated Umbridge, and the Minister of Magic laying prone on the ground behind him, and a squad of Aurors in front of him. "Oh Harry! What..." Hermione took a moment to leap over the toad witch's body, "... what happened, Harry?" she asked as he hugged him tightly.

"It was self defense," he pointed at Umbridge. "And he's not dead," he gestured to the Minister behind them, rolling his eyes up in thought, he added, "Yet."

"No, I mean what happened?" she snapped at him. "V-Voldemort had me and the others held prisoner by Snape and Malfoy and the rest of them. And Wormtail was there too! He taunted you and then, and then, and then... Oh Harry!" she latched onto him again, crying her tears into his neck.

"I killed him," he answered her softly. "The rest of them too. When, when I heard your voice... I lost it. I lost control and I just killed them. For threatening to hurt you, I killed all of them. And I'd do it again."

She clung to him all the tighter and he finally put his arm around her and held her close.

"You know I'm probably going to Azkaban for this, right?"

He felt her nod against him, still holding tight.

"Wait for me?" he joked.

"Forever," she promised, "You stupid prat. But, what about Ginny?"

"And Luna," he added. "We'll figure that out later."

"Uh... you're not going to be arrested tonight, Mister Potter," the lead Auror, since he was doing all the talking that's who he had to be, said. "But, uh... we do have some questions we need answered."

"Tomorrow?" Harry asked, hopeful.

After a bunch of looking around and shrugging and nodding of heads, all the Aurors seemed to agree. "Tomorrow, yeah, tomorrow will be fine. Uh, have a good night, Mister Potter." And then the Aurors got the Minister, and placed some kind of Crime Scene ward over Umbridge's body that made it so no one could see or touch it, and then they left.

"You are going to explain all of this, aren't you Harry?" Hermione whimpered in his arms, as he carried her along.

"Sure, just got to pick up Ginny and Luna first and then we'll get some snacks from the kitchens on our way to the Room of Requirement, oh hey Luna," he stopped as Luna met them just outside the Great Hall. "Don't remember seeing you here before. Something change?"

"It's the eighth time you've killed Voldemort in battle," she smoothly replied, a wide expectant grin adorning her face. "You've made it a habit of making lots and lots of good memories after every time you successfully kill him. At least from what I can recall. I went ahead and made a deal to have a copious amount of chocolate syrup, chocolate-covered strawberries, chocolate fondue fountains and whip cream made available. Oh, and I also grabbed Ginny before Malfoy could and have informed her of our relationship."

"Harry? What is Luna talking about?" Hermione asked, still cradled in Harry's arms, and more than a bit intimidated that the two of them seemed to be discussing something she had no clue about.

"I'm stuck in a time loop, and quite apparently it's the eighth time I've gone and killed him in the Department of Mysteries. And came back alive. Don't worry," he quickly added, "I'll explain it all. Oh, by the way, I'm dating you, Ginny and Luna. I know Ginny is in love with me, Luna seems quite taken with me, and I am slowly falling in love with all of you. Hell, for all I know, judging by the way I reacted tonight, I'm already in love with the lot of you. Lead the way Luna. I'll try to explain it in logical terms you can understand, Hermione."

"OK," she whispered in a soft voice, her eyes wide as her mind opened to whole new possibilities. Most of them in the gutter.

AN: Wow. I can honestly say, that's the best response that I've seen for ANY of my fics! All just cause I asked for 'Kill Kenny' ideas on

ways to do Voldemort in, huh? Go figure. Well, it's not until next chapter that everyone gets to see what all their suggestions came up with. It'll be ready next month with the next chapter, (Spoiler Alert!) aptly named "Divination" for those that care about such things. Anyway, I'm still accepting new suggestions, but I meant it when I said I was sticking to the top ten and no more. The current (as of the posting of this chapter) ranking is as follows;

(Poison)Mustard gas, or maybe something a bit more slow-acting, like botulism toxin

(Portkey explosives to INSIDE Voldemort)

(Bear traps. Enchanted bear traps!)

(Chainsaws)

(Magical Beast: Gorgon)

(Mandrake Howler)

(Drown in Shit/Crap/Poop/Etc)

(Attacked by hoard of Pink Frogs; maybe make them "cherry flavored" Chocolate Frogs)

(Love Potion Poison) tasteless odorless potion that has some lethal effect on a Dark Creature

(Negative effects from Positive Spells) Booby trapping rooms where Voldemort will be with Cheering Charms, Tickling jinxes, and other non-dark spells that evoke emotions that would be lethal to a Dark Creature.

To be clear, while I did get a whole lot more ideas than just this, I meant this to be a way of getting ideas on how to ASSASSINATE Voldemort. The personal touch ones were very creative, and you all know who you are, I sent several PM replies to your ideas and reviews, but for this instance I'm asking for ways that Harry can have Voldemort killed without actually being in danger of dying himself. :)

Not to worry for those of you thinking that it's all said and done. You actually have until March 1st to offer up as many ideas as you'd like.

Some of the above, while they still make the Top Ten, are not my favorite and in fact teetering on the bottom of the list and the moment something better comes along, well, let's just say there are plenty of chances still for someone to get their ideas in. ;)

Look Forward To Your Ideas! Please Read & Review!

Chapter 13: Divination

Harry was working on his Occlumency now. He'd finished that book by Professor X, whoever that had been, and had managed to figure out a multitude of tricks to keep Voldemort from even wanting to read his mind. However he'd discovered, through oversight when he'd forgotten to send a particular note at a certain time on several occasions, that those same ways did not automatically block everyone else from entering his mind. If anything, the simple illusionary defenses he'd been using against Voldemort only gave Snape more reasons to mock him.

According to the book, the next stage involved segmenting and organizing one's own mind, and eventually working towards creating a full and interactive mindscape. This was a lot harder in practice than in theory though.

Currently, Harry was just sitting and meditating in the Room of Requirement, taking a break from the Twins' Beater training for as long as he could. The Room had appeared as a simple cushion on the stone floor, and the ambient lighting dimmed to near-blackness as he sat upon it. Closing his eyes, he began by, as the book suggested, sorting through his memories, the oldest he had, and then building everything else from that, using it as a foundation for everything else he was going to build. Unfortunately, his oldest memory was also one that he had repressed until his Third Year. Still, focusing on that night and then trying to remember further back, he became aware of more pleasant feelings. Not true memories, but emotional memories. He used those as his foundation instead, and worked his way forward through time, organizing each and every memory, both according to when it happened, as well as the emotions and things that happened in the memory itself.

At first it was harder than studying for the OWLs had been. Then, as he progressed and organized things more and more, it became easier and easier, until pretty soon he found that he was able to recall just about everything from his early childhood, down to the number of drops of his blood on Dudley's fist, to the color of all the students clothes in his elementary class on the first and last days of school. After that, he went back several times through all those memories and found he remembered a lot more than he'd thought he had, as he could soon recall a level of detail to those memories that surprised him more and more with everything he discovered. It

wasn't that suddenly he could remember everything like those people with photographic memory, it was more that he finally started paying attention and was learning how to remember what he paid attention to.

It didn't all happen in a single reset either, and after even one day with the Twins, he needed at least one day off, otherwise he feared he would go homicidally insane. Again.

Still, he was making good progress, managing about a year's worth of memories per reset/meditation. At least that was his level of progress for the first ten or so years of his life. And then he got to the point in his memories where he met Hagrid and learned he was a wizard and about magic. Most everything happened much the same as he remembered it normally, save that a lot of small details that he hadn't paid any attention to the first time around ended up being all the clues needed to forewarn him about a whole lot of the crap he ended up having to deal with near the end of the school term. He also could recall everything he'd ever read, but only because he could remember reading them, and recall what his eyes saw as part of his new way of remembering. A few other details also made themselves known. Things that weren't ever part of his life or memories prior to Hogwarts, such as magic, added a whole new dynamic to the memories he was re-experiencing.

For example, his experience with the Sorting Hat, now that he knew what to pay attention to, he could actually remember feeling the magic of the Hat probing his mind and sorting through everything in his mind and more in a matter of seconds. And then his first time intentionally casting magic in class, now that he was so much more sensitive to magic and the elements, he could recognize a host of information that he previously had not even been aware that he'd been aware of! It slowed his progress down from a whole year per reset to at least five or six meditations just for his first year, and then twice that for the next year, and double it again for the year after that, and then double that for the previous year, and triple that for this past year, not counting the time after the Time Loop began. Of course these meditations happened in between his Beater lessons with the twins, and in the end didn't even cover a quarter of the amount of time the Twins were working him over for.

Why it took more time was not because he had more to sort through, it was simply that Dumbledore had lied to him yet again. He also

discovered that Memory Charms did not erase memories, the magic simply buried them. How they were buried is why it is believed that just countering the magic of the memory charm will not restore the memory. Truthfully, it was just like retrieving traumatic memories. Hard, difficult, and often times painful, but still possible for those willing to work at it. Which is why everyone said that there is no way to restore memories once they've been wiped. Harry, however, was definitely willing to work at it.

The Headmaster had been honest enough to give him the broad strokes, but he'd neglected the minor stuff. Lockhart, for starters, had not been lying when he said the only spell he was any good at was the Memory Charm. Judging by the number of classes the man had 'changed' from the true disasters they had been to 'more ego-driven quizzes and tests' or the occasional 'reenactment of scenes' from the same ego-driving books, Harry wasn't surprised that Lockhart hadn't been caught before his own spell backfired on him. Some of those 'disaster classes' had been along the same lines of that first disaster of a class, with Harry, Hermione and Ron countering whatever creature Lockhart unleashed in the classroom while all the rest got assaulted or run over. Sometimes Hermione asked some key questions that probably had her disillusioned much sooner about Lockhart's fame than what had happened in the end, and seeing that those same questions had simultaneously disillusioned all the other young witches in the class, Lockhart would immediately correct the oversight with a room-wide Obliviate and then they would all be adoring fangirls again.

But that's skipping ahead slightly. Every weekend of his First Year, Harry had been taken by Professor McGonagall to the Hospital wing, usually for the hour immediately after lunch, where he was then subjected to all manner of magical and physical tests, and then the Headmaster wiped his memory and sent him to the Library to join Hermione and Ron in searching for clues about the Third Floor Corridor and Nicholas Flamel.

The few times Hermione or Ron came with him, their memories were wiped too, which explained why Hermione 'forgot' about that book she'd borrowed for some light reading where they finally found Nicholas Flamel's identity, several months after she'd had it in her possession. And then there was the "first time" Dumbledore told him about.

He hadn't been asleep for even a day after he faced Voldemort in the Third Floor Corridor hidden room. He woke up in a slight delirium, but it quickly passed. No one was in the room save for him, and the mountain of presents had already been started, though wasn't as large as it would soon be in another few days. He wasn't able to get up yet, his magic was at an all time low, lower even than what Harry with all his recent intensive training had ever allowed it to get to. In fact, he had hardly been able to move so much as a finger, and his eyelids were heavy and could hardly open. After a few minutes of silent thought, he heard some noises, and came to the realization that someone else had entered the room. He'd tried to move his head, open his eyes, even to speak, but he could do none of that.

Soon enough, the person stepped over him and revealed it to be Madam Pomphrey. "Good, he's still out of it. Bring them in," she ordered. There were more noises, and among them he heard Professor Dumbledore's voice and that of an elderly man's, but one he did not recognize.

"Nicholas, I doubt there is any other way. I've told both of you the Prophecy. Can there be any other interpretation?" Dumbledore was saying.

"I've met your Divination Professor," the old man, Nicholas Harry presumed, replied. "There are as many interpretations to what this 'Power The Dark Lord Knows Not' could be as there are stars in the sky and the points of view you may see them from. Perenelle, my dear? Do you agree?"

"Save the drama for your private discussions, you two," a mean sounding old lady snapped, she sounded much closer than the men did, like she was right next to his bed. He still couldn't open his eyes all the way and so everything was just shaded blurs. The voices were clear in his memory though. "This has only been done three times before. Never to one so young though. The protection young Lily gave for Harry has been expended. It was expended that very night so long ago. Whatever it was that Harry did to destroy the husk and free the wraith, if it could even be blamed on Lily's protection, it too has expired. That much I can see. The wraith also took nearly all of the boy's magic."

That at least explained why he'd been so drained.

"If we're going to do this, we need to do it in the next hour at the latest," the old woman, Perenelle, said. "His magic is already regenerating. I expect him to be back to normal within the next day or so at the most. After we do this though, it will be at least a week."

"On behalf of the whole world, I thank you for your sacrifice, my friends," Dumbledore humbly spoke.

Nicholas scoffed, a croaking laughter came from him before he spoke rather breathlessly, "Hah! Whole world, my wrinkled ass you goat-wanker! And what sacrifice? I've been making Stones for centuries. As complicated as it is to make those things, do you really think I would have let you have our only one? Or that I wouldn't have already had another made the moment you had your lackey pick up that one from the Goblins? Never really understood why you wizards started trusting those creatures. Safe bet one of them let slip about the drop vault where I put that so you could pick it up. Probably why it was broken into in the first place. Oh wipe that silly stunned look off your face. Do you really think I'm going to let you or your nurse here know that I have extra Stones? I'll be Obliviating your memory just as assuredly as you'll be wiping the boy's memory of this little experiment. Or did you think he wouldn't wake up from the pain of having the Philosopher's Stone implanted into his body?"

What followed was the seventh most painful experience of Harry's life. Well, it was ranked seventh now, but before those others it had definitely been the most painful. He woke up screaming and begging to know why they were doing it to him. He begged for them to stop. He swore never to trust Dumbledore again when the man kept whispering meaningless platitudes to him. And then they Obliviated him and he was conscious only long enough to witness the Flamels Oblivate both Dumbledore and Madam Pomphrey, who had participated, however reluctantly, but still participated.

After unlocking this memory, Harry took an extra day off.

Before and after that day off though, he carefully, with the exactness of a scientist not knowing what he was looking for but knowing it was there all the same, went through every aspect of his magic and even his body with all manner of diagnostic spells he learned just to find out what had been done to him. The Stone, apparently, hadn't been physically inserted into his body, but rather had been converted to its pure magical form and that magic forced into joining with his own

Magic Core. Seeing how seamlessly it had been accomplished, Harry suspected it had been done through a ritual he'd been too out of it to notice the details of. In going back over the memory, he realized that the ritual had probably already been done beforehand and all that was required was putting it in him with all the participants of the ritual. Upon reflection, he began to recognize what the addition of the Philosopher's Stone to his magic had done for him.

For starters, he healed faster than before. Well, after that week where it was integrated he started healing faster. He also realized that his ability to commune with all four elements rather than just one came from the Philosopher Stone. Also, his magic had gotten a rather significant boost. And another thing, which he was only just beginning to recognize, his body could now be changed by his magic. The adjustments after his accidents with Apparating being his latest clue, another half a dozen also sprang to mind. He figured that he had only just begun to uncover what all that little 'addition' of Dumbledore's had done to him.

After his day off, he started trying to figure out what all the Philosopher Stone had done, as well as moving on to the other event Dumbledore had told him about. His summer with Hermione and Ron. The days and days he thought he'd been cut off from his friends were much the same as he initially remembered them, but after not getting a response to his initial letter, he now remembered deciding to find Hermione in the phone book and taking a taxi to her place if needed. Turns out he didn't need to as she came and got him after he called, and thus he packed up his trunk and walked out on the Dursleys the day after Vernon told him not to let Hedwig out of her cage anymore. He spent roughly a week there and sleeping in the Granger's spare room before he noticed that Ron still wasn't sending any letters back. Hermione, being the stickler for rules that she was at the time, sent a letter detailing the trouble he was having to Professor McGonagall. She showed up that very night with Dumbledore in tow and the next thing Harry knew, he was back at the Dursley's and the very next evening was when he had that memorable conversation with Dudley and when Dobby showed himself. There were bars on his window before the weekend.

Not as bad as what he was still to uncover, he was sure, but bad enough that Professor McGonagall had been part of it at all. He was seriously starting to lose trust in just about everybody he'd ever put his trust in.

Harry was amazed that he even remembered his Second Year at all, as he came to realize how many times he'd been Obliviated. Between Lockhart, Dumbledore, and his continuing weekend appointments in the Hospital Wing, his mind was being erased practically once a day for the whole year. No wonder everything was in such a haze half the time. And now looking back at everything, he could see all the clues that he had missed. Things that Hermione had caught onto, and undoubtedly Dumbledore had as well, became glaringly obvious. Ginny's "crush" as well, now that he knew her so well, while cute, was also quite clearly not the behavior she displayed during her First Year. He recognized that she was bothered by something, but he hadn't paid enough attention at the time to realize that her nervousness came from fear, not a crush. Something that was all too obvious in hindsight now.

By the time he got to the basilisk fight in his memory, he realized that the times he'd spent the weekend being tested had dropped off to once a month for a while, and had stopped after Hermione had been petrified. And then after freeing Dobby from the Malfoy family, he of course went to the Hospital Wing to get patched up. That night, after everyone had gone to sleep, he found himself awoken and in one of Pomphrey's beds. Dumbledore was asking about a taint. Professor McGonagall was curious about the bite he'd survived thanks only to phoenix intervention. Pomphrey was answering their questions straightforward and with a clinical detachment. Harry was pleased to note that he was apparently immune to most poisons and in fact his blood could be used as a poison component if used in the appropriate way. The only other information they discussed in his presence was Pomphrey noting that the power of the Philosopher's Stone had fully integrated with his core, and had undoubtedly helped in him surviving the Basilisk poison.

The reason why he hadn't remembered hearing about that before now was quite simply that he'd sort of lost his temper when they got to the part about the Stone and shouted at them and demanded answers. McGonagall transfigured his bedclothes to restrain him, Pomphrey then came along with two vials, one filled with a familiar black substance (basilisk venom) and the other a mostly clear fluid that had a golden shine to it (phoenix tears). Dumbledore wanted to know how good his immunity was and had Pomphrey force the venom down his throat before pouring in the phoenix tears. She then pricked him with a manufactured poison and he never felt a thing.

Dumbledore then Obliviated the entire experience and sent him back to bed.

That summer was almost entirely as Harry remembered it. Except for that day that "he spent gardening", as Dumbledore said, he remembered no such thing. Marge was even more vindictive than normal on that day, and that bulldog was constantly snapping at him. He wrote the letter and smuggled Hedwig outside so she could deliver it. He remembered being surprised at the rapid response his missive had garnered, but even now felt grateful for it. The Ministry showed up with Dumbledore at the lead and the Minister right behind him. It more or less went just like Dumbledore said, save that he was there from the beginning rather than 'after the fact'.

Harry had no true understanding of what Dumbledore was up to in all this, but those conversations between him and the Minister right before the children and muggles were 'modified', were highly enlightening. Dumbledore really did think of Sirius as a threat at that time. He was genuinely concerned for everyone's safety, and was there purely in an advisory capacity. Harry had never seen him order an Auror, or even look sideways at the Minister. In fact, save that Dumbledore was the first one through the door, he was entirely submissive for the entire encounter, keeping quiet and speaking only when asked direct questions.

His Third Year was much more active. Beginning with his summer spent on Diagon Alley, when he intentionally ran away, this time without the big production of the others coming to get him. Thankfully, other than recalling a great more detail than before, he discovered no hidden memories and as best as he could tell he was not Obliviated at any point. He wasn't called to the Hospital Wing every weekend, and everything else happened exactly as he remembered it beforehand. It still took him close to twenty-five resets to sort through his entire Third Year at Hogwarts though.

Finally, he came to the summer before his Fourth Year. He was particularly anxious about what he would find out, as it was during the Yule Ball that Dumbledore admitted was the last time he'd been Obliviated. Something having to do with Fleur apparently. Still, there was a process to this, and he had to take it one day at a time and build up to it, otherwise it would all collapse and he'd be right back where he started. Looking back at the World Cup, he found whole new things to be amazed and impressed with. The skill and sheer

tenacity displayed by all the players was inspiring, and the play itself was equally impressive. Doubly so because he could now recognize a lot of the moves they were using, and knew he could even pull them off himself just as well as they could, if not even better. At least as far as the Chasers and Seekers were concerned.

He could also now remember the feel of his wand being picked from his pocket during the middle of the game. He also caught a few other clues that should have raised alarms, but didn't at the time, all leading up to the inevitable conclusion of what happened that year. Having heard it from Crouch Jr's own mouth, Harry knew the day Mister Weasley had left in a rush that was when they'd replaced the real Mad-Eye Moody and when the switch was pulled off. Mister Weasley could have saved Moody and stopped it all, but no one could have known. Though the clues were there, they weren't enough on their own to act upon. Even in hindsight, he could not see how it could have turned out any differently.

The first two months of school had been busy and full of excitement, especially after the two schools arrived. And then Halloween night, when his name came out of the cup. He really should have just stood up and said he declined right then and there, but honestly the idea had never even once occurred to his 14 year old mind. He'd been too overwhelmed to have any real reaction at all, except maybe his usual brand of fear and confusion.

After that, it was just one bad experience after the next, with very little good to outweigh any of it. Ron not believing him. Moody's lessons. Hermione and her S.P.E.W. campaign. And then Malfoy and those pins. On top of all that, he had to deal with the completely unwanted fame that came with the Tournament. He wondered why he'd been such a patsy when he was younger. Explained his temper problem he'd had this year though. Repressed feelings and all that.

Looking back at the dragon fight, he was amazed he hadn't been killed in those few minutes before his broom finally arrived. The aftermath was worse by far, but he'd been rather high on having his best friend back, so he hadn't been paying attention at the time. With one broom ride, he'd proven to the world that he deserved to be in the Tournament and that he was as good as three 'adult' magic users. It made it all but impossible for him to bow out gracefully or anything like that. Following that, for the entire month of December, there was the build-up to the Yule Ball, and Harry regretted more

than anything the trouble he'd put the Patil Sisters through that night, it really had not been fair.

Finally, after close to thirty resets, he got to the night in question in his memories. He began with when he woke up that morning and...

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...Harry found himself waking up at 7 as his alarm clock went off. He waited and realized it was the start of a new reset. Searching his memory, he recalled the day leading up to Yule Ball with perfect clarity. He remembered getting ready for it. He remembered waiting for Pavarti and then meeting Hermione and Krum in the front hall, and then walking into the changed Great Hall, the first dance where he really had no clue as to what he was doing, and then...

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...Harry's eyes snapped open as the alarm clock went off again. Except it hadn't. He'd reset. As soon as he got to...

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... OK, what the bloody hell? He wanted to scream, but instead he Disapparated from his bed and bounced all over the place before finally managing to get to the Headmaster's Office, Apparating just inside the door. Without hesitation, Harry ran over to the alcove where it was kept and pulled out the Headmaster's Pensieve.

He quickly identified the six hour block of the actual Yule Ball that he was prevented from remembering in any significant detail, though any time before and after that he could recall with the same perfect ease that all his other memories now came to him with. Latching onto the blocked memories with his wand, he drew them out from his temple and then dropped the silver strands into the Pensieve and waited for it to mix before sticking his head into it. He honestly wasn't surprised to find himself in the same room he had just left, but a year and a half sooner in time. Dumbledore was seated in his chair and was alone in the room, save for a comatose version of his younger self, still in his dress robes.

"If you're seeing this particular memory again, Mister Potter," Dumbledore was saying, "it is most likely due to your moving further ahead in your Occlumency lessons than I have planned for you. Therefore, I have placed protections against you moving any further along with..."

Harry tuned out the man's drivel and started analyzing everything else in the room. The book by Professor X had mentioned these kind of protections. Mostly as a warning against, as putting these sorts of magics in any mind could potentially destabilize said mind. It also talked about the ways, or way rather as there had only been discovered one way to remove such protections. For each moment of blocked memory and/or ability, there was a key placed on the outside, or rather in the defense of the protections themselves. In this case, Dumbledore had left a message, warning Harry from trying to breach them, and so objects in this room, at this moment, during this play of false memory were the keys to unlocking it and freeing his memory.

Seven objects immediately caught his attention. Those were the obvious keys, and could be combined to form the first lock. There were always three locks on these kinds of protections. Break the locks, the protections get removed. But before he could break the first lock, he needed to identify the six other more subtle keys that made up the second lock, as well as the untold number of keys that made up the third lock. That was when Harry looked up and noticed six portraits were missing from their frames.

"Clever, old man, very clever," he sighed and rewound the Pensieve back to the beginning of the false memory. Those six were there and left immediately upon Dumbledore beginning to talk. That was the second lock. Harry rewound the memory again, and touched the seven obvious objects and locked the portraits in their paintings. The memory stopped playing and suddenly it became interactive.

"What are you doing Harry?" the fake Dumbledore asked in the suddenly darkened room.

"Using your Pensieve to unlock the memory you're protecting," Harry answered easily, otherwise ignoring the false memory, instead trying to find more of the keys to the third lock. So far he'd found three of them. "Nice socks by the way." Those were first two keys.

"You have learned too much. I'm sorry Harry," the false Dumbledore then pulled its wand and pointed it Harry and whispered, "Obliviate!"

Nothing changed or happened, though Harry did find another four keys.

"What have you done, Harry?" the false Dumbledore whispered in mock-shock. Harry could hear the undertones of anger in the man's voice after all this time in dealing with him.

"Wow, over ten keys," Harry commented rather than answer. "Hope you didn't go over thirteen. The prime numbers after that get ridiculously high, and the third key only allows for prime numbers."

"How are you...? Who has taught you Occlumency?"

"Self-taught. Though I found a really interesting and helpful book that talked about these kinds of protections. Hope you didn't put any on Fleur. I heard they... degradate the mind they're placed in."

"Poppycock," the false Dumbledore scoffed. Harry shot the fake memory protection a look, and suddenly found the last of the keys.

"I sincerely hope the real you doesn't react like this when I tell him about this," he commented as he activated all the remaining keys and suddenly Harry was kicked out of the Pensieve, rather violently.

"Ow," he looked up and saw the real Professor Dumbledore standing over him while Mad-Eye Moody had him by the scruff of the neck. "Unnecessary, by the way."

"Harry, I..." Dumbledore started to say something, but Harry was already diving back into his memories, the keys to the locks firmly in mind. He set about organizing everything once more and within moments had filled in everything that he'd been missing about those six hours. About how he and Ron sat there, making Padma and Pavarti miserable, and then going out to the gardens, overhearing Hagrid's confession to Madame Maxime, Ron making Hermione run off crying, and then...

"Whoa," Harry's eyes snapped open as the missing twenty minutes of what he'd done on his way back to the dorm room were finally

answered. Turned out it was Dumbledore who informed the Beauxbaton Headmistress, and not the other way around. "So, Fleur claimed I was some kind of male Veela and then proved it to me, huh? Good thing you stopped us when you did, Headmaster, otherwise I wouldn't have been a virgin when I thought I lost my virginity. Then you took me back here and lobotomized me with some ancient mental protections you didn't even know about, before having me stumble my way back to the dorms. Man... I really have to make up for that night to the Patil Twins."

"I'm so sorry, Harry," Dumbledore raised his wand and put it to Harry's forehead and whispered, "Obliviate!"

Harry felt the magic flow through his memory and try to suppress the targeted memories, but the way Harry had structured and organized his memories now, the magic kept slipping around them, not able to touch them at all, and told to ignore the more recent memories, save for those from today. Except 'today' in Harry's mind covered quite a bit of ground and what Dumbledore was trying to erase was only a few hours old. So when he removed his wand, nothing had changed at all.

"Now, Harry, tell me, what are you doing here?" Dumbledore asked, assured that his spell had worked.

"Well, I was trying to remove the protections you had put on my memory of the night of the Yule Ball, when Fleur showed me that I have some kind of male Veela attraction. Now that I think about it, that explains what happened after that damn Slytherin ritual those two got me into. Also explains why the mobs of girls came after me like they did. Come to think of it... it wasn't Pomphrey's purification at all! I just finally reached the necessary level of magic control! That, or she put a binding spell on me instead of a purification ritual. Well, no wonder!"

Frowning, Dumbledore put his wand back on Harry's head and said a little louder, "Obliviate!" Same result.

"That's getting annoying," Harry remarked as he reached behind him and put one finger on Mad-Eye's wrist. The man crumbled like a sack of potatoes. "Don't worry," he said to Dumbledore's sudden alarm, "He's only stunned. Now, obviously Headmaster Black up there informed you that I was here, and I've long since learned

about the Headmaster's Access in the wards, so safe to say you either Apparated or just used a Portkey to get you and Moody here as soon as you did. Care to tell me where the Heart of Hogwarts is? I'm curious about getting Headmaster Access for myself and my friends."

"Stupefy!" Dumbledore cast a red jet of light at Harry. Harry didn't even bother saying anything, instead leaving his wand in his pocket and holding up both hands, further powering the silent-remote-cast Protego shield with his wandless magic as a booster.

After the spell had broken the shield, Harry stepped back and shook some feeling into both of his hands. "Wow, quite a lot of power in that. You've always held back on me before. But then again, the few times where I actually challenged you, I was using Elemental Magic, so I suppose that sort of forced your hand, didn't it? I know where I stand against Voldemort. I wonder where I stand against you, Professor." Harry's wand was suddenly in his hand and pointing at the Headmaster.

"Harry, don't do this. It's not too late to come back to the light!" Dumbledore begged.

Harry frowned, and then Disapparated, or to be more precise, he Streamed all over the room before reappearing where he'd stood before. His trail was as solid white as it had ever been. "You were saying?" he remarked, still frowning. "Being against you doesn't automatically make me a Dark Wizard, Albus Dumbledore. It just makes me an adult who does not appreciate being manipulated."

"You are not yet an adult, Harry. There is still much for you to learn before you earn that responsibility," Dumbledore shot another jet of red light at him, silently this time.

Harry dodged to the left, using his magic to boost his natural reflexes, and shot three stunners in reply. Dumbledore merely raised a shield that blocked all three. Dumbledore cast another spell, one Harry recognized as a Transfiguration type, aimed at the ground. Harry didn't bother dodging, instead using his connection to the stones beneath his feet to negate the magical changes. Unfortunately, that had not been Dumbledore's target. The spell bounced off of the floor and ricocheted to Harry's clothes. His pajamas and bathrobe became animated and started trying to

restrain him. Harry remained unmoving for all of two seconds before shrugging and vanished the clothing right off his body.

"Now don't go getting any ideas, you old pervert," Harry teased, "I'm straight as the day is long. What else you got?" He then shot off half a dozen stunners, while using a variety of Leviosa, Banishing, and Summoning charms to send all the objects in the room flying straight at Dumbledore all at once. When books started flying, he used precisely targeted Incendios to light them aflame, and then 'bent' a few minor curses and jinxes to go around the Headmaster's back and sides, attacking him on all fronts.

Dumbledore's wand was a blur as every last one of the flying objects was stopped mid-air, the fires put out, and a full body shield protecting him from every one of the other spells.

"Hn," Harry snorted, impressed in spite of everything.

"Harry, please, explain to me what has happened..." Dumbledore begged once more, clearly not even trying to go on the offensive.

Harry shrugged again and replied, "I have. Many, many, many times. I'm defending myself. What's your excuse for wiping the memory of children and friends? Don't bother answering, it's a rhetorical question." Harry tossed his wand into the air and then changed into his Frost Giant form. It was basically still him, just in a much larger body, roughly eight feet at the shoulder, with translucent blue skin, and red eyes and skin ridges along his face and around the joints on his skin. He caught his wand and held it tightly in his fist. The Frost Giants could naturally manipulate and control ice, the same way wizards could Apparate. But they could also use magic as magic. They just hadn't learned how to make foci that worked for all of them as a race yet. Or at least they hadn't the last time any had seen them around.

"Depulso," Harry's voice had deepened and changed timbre in conjunction with his size shift. From his right fist, a wave of raw force was unleashed and knocked Dumbledore back into the wall. "Your turn."

Dumbledore's eyes were wide, disbelieving. "How did you do that?" the old man demanded to know.

The Frost Giant shrugged his massive shoulders and replied in a deep resounding base, "I'm a magical creature. I have roughly twenty magical creature Animagus forms. Frost Giant happens to be the only one where I have a humanoid form and vocal cords as well as lips. The only difference between normal creatures and magical creatures? Magical creatures can use magic. It's just most don't have the proclivity to developing foci and learn how to use them. Give a wand to a centaur and teach them a spell, they can cast as well as any wizard. Don't confuse a magical creature's natural ability as its sole use of magic. I'm a Frost Giant, so I can magically control ice, but that doesn't mean I can't still use magic itself."

Dumbledore just continued to lay against the wall, staring in disbelief.

"So... are we done?" There was no response from the old man on the floor. "Guess we are then." Harry changed back to his natural form and then immediately Disapparated and made his way through the wards to the Headmaster's Access once again, and from there he just went back to his bed and crawled back in to get some more sleep. Maybe even organize the rest of his memories of his Fourth Year while he was at it. After he woke up, he decided to take the rest of this reset off as well as the next before he went back to the Twins for more Beater training, and then alternate days organizing the rest of his memories pre-Time Loop after that. Maybe try and make up for the Yule Ball to the Sisters with his extra off day.

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Thankfully, Harry discovered that there were no more inconsistencies in his memories, no more protections left by the Headmaster, and no unexpected Obliviations. There was maybe one or two times Snape got him, but they were very minor things overall, the most recent example being the Occlumency lessons neither one of them enjoyed. Apparently, after Harry had accidentally reflected the Professor's Legilimency probe in what he thought was their last lesson, Dumbledore gave Snape orders to get back to it after hearing from the grapevine that they had quit. Snape had cornered Harry after their next class together and pretty much forced him into one last lesson, where the younger boy gleefully repeated his previous success and got into even more private memories. Snape erased the whole lesson from his mind afterward and the stolen memories along with them.

Since they weren't his memories, Harry unfortunately could not recall or organize them into his mind, but he did remember that his reaction had been one of sympathy and understanding for his menace. Not enough to keep him from continuing to blame the bastard for his kidnapping/death on 'Room' days and get him shipped to Azkaban on every other, but enough to make him curious. Just not curious enough to go and try to find out any time soon.

After getting his head organized, he started working on his more recent memories, the memories of the Time Loop. To his everlasting shock, as he set about organizing his mind, every last one of his remaining unorganized memories went whizzing about in his head and automatically organized themselves amongst what he'd already accomplished. And memory number one, the first day, Day Zero of the Time Loop, stood out like a shining beacon amidst the rest.

Harry remembered making his wish to the odd grandfather clock in Dumbledore's office.

The next step in Occlumency training was to take the organization of his memories and use them to construct a mental landscape, a mindscape, where he was creator and sole occupant. It was recommended it be a safe place, but Harry didn't really have any places like that amongst his memories, so he used Hogwarts itself as his mindscape instead. It may not be safe, but it was the most familiar place he could identify, and he was learning more of its secrets than anyone else had ever discovered with each new (or repeated) day.

He remembered making his wish to the odd grandfather clock in Dumbledore's office.

It took him about half an hour to construct his mindscape, and using that as his 'secret place' he went crazy with the imagery and created three different Hogwarts in his head. The outer layer, what any Legilimens would run into, was surrounded on all sides by the Forbidden Forest, and the Black Lake was now a moat around the castle, well either that or the castle was on an island at the center of the lake instead of a cliff overlooking it. All the dark magical sea creatures, especially the giant squid, that Harry knew to be in the Black Lake remained very active and very dangerous in that moat. There was no drawbridge.

Once inside the castle, provided anybody could get that far, they had to get to the Room of Requirement. Only the Room now shifted from any flat surface it damn well pleased, but still was marked by being opposite that painting of the nitwit teaching trolls to dance. Another catch was that instead of walking in front of it three times, he made the requirement be that they had to "strip naked" and then do a hundred jump-n-jacks in front of it while saying "Dumbledore is an ass! Snape is a pussy! Umbridge is a Toad Bitch! Fudge is shit!" over and over again.

Once inside the Room of Requirement, they would find themselves on the other side of the Black Lake, but this time with Hogwarts on the other side, with the Forest/Outer layer behind them and the lake stretching from horizon to horizon in front of them. The same monsters were in this lake as the first one just double the amount and increasingly more aggressive, so swimming it was not recommended. And there were no boats. If they ever actually managed to get to the castle across the lake, the moment they stepped inside they would discover themselves on the ceiling and would then have to navigate the completely reversed layout to get to his trunk, which would be under his bed in his dorm room, which was now located where the Chamber of Secrets used to be, which now had as the password a complicated lecture about the difference between magical creatures and normal creatures, but done in the same language aka Parseltongue. Since no one but he and Ron now knew the way to the Chamber of Secrets, he felt confident in this level of security.

If they ever made it past that, they would then find themselves in Diagon Alley, stepping out of Gringotts bank. From there, they would have to navigate a number of Apparation/Portal points that went to everywhere Harry had ever been, before finally ending up in Hogsmeade, where they could then climb five or so mountains in order to get to Hogwarts, which then was surrounded by another Forbidden Forest, another lake, another moat past the lake, and then if they ever managed to get inside the front door itself, let alone past the gates and tower challenges he'd erected, they would find themselves in his hall of memories. Harry remembered seeing a painting, several of them actually, that cast optical illusions about endless staircases and labyrinths that went nowhere and where gravity and spatial logic did not apply. The inside of this Third Hogwarts made those paintings seem like finger paintings by

comparison. And it was constantly shifting along with his every thought.

He remembered making his wish to the odd grandfather clock in Dumbledore's office.

After constructing his mindscape and its defenses, Harry sat at the center of his inner-Hogwarts, deep in meditation, both physically and mentally. The final step of Occlumency training, the book said, was constructing an "Inner Self", an avatar of one's own consciousness that could interact with the mindscape on the mindscape's level. Right now, he was just a formless presence of power, a part of everything and focused equally on everything all at once, rather than just one point. That is what he was attempting to do now, change that formlessness into a focused shape, a body, his body to be specific.

It was similar to his Animagus and Apparation training, but he found that it was harder as well. While he could 'imagine' himself standing there in his mindscape, it would just be an imagining, it wouldn't be... "HIM"! Harry had a feeling it would take him a while to complete this portion of his Occlumency training.

He remembered making his wish to the odd grandfather clock in Dumbledore's office.

Harry had finally gotten to the point where the Twins' Beater training had gotten to the point of self-study. Or rather, they told him, after he explained what he wanted from them and what he could do and had learned from them already, that they had nothing more to teach him and if he wanted to go any further, he would have to figure it out on his own, develop his skills beyond the basics they had shown him. He planned on going back to Madam Hooch his next Quidditch Reset, to see if she had anything she could show him or help him with. In the meantime though, he was still working on his Occlumency training for the rest of his current reset.

The only problem though, was he was continuously distracted by one recurring thought.

He'd finally remembered what had started this time loop. And it was all his fault.

His eyes snapped open and for the next little while he just stared at the stone wall of the actual Room of Requirement, not doing anything else, just staring... and blaming. Or perhaps the correct term was brooding?

Yeah, he'd been hurting, confused, angry, and mourning Sirius being dead, but to actually wish for Voldemort to never be a problem again, or that nothing bad would ever happen to him or his friends, or that nothing like Voldemort ever could happen again? He must have been INSANE!

Distracted as he was, he knew he would get no further in his Occlumency until he had resolved this. Laughing to himself suddenly, he voiced his quiet thought, "So much for the theory that I needed to find my one true love to get out of this time loop." He sighed and closed his eyes again, trying to meditate on appearing in his mindscape as himself.

He entered his mindscape as easily as he'd created it, easier even, but he did not appear in a form. He was just there and everywhere in it all at once. A random thought occurred to him. The thought took the form of Hedwig delivering a letter. The letter was a map, pinpointing the outermost point of his mindscape defenses. It also showed the route he'd constructed for actually getting to his innermost mindscape.

Harry's eyes snapped open and he said out loud, "No way. Not happening today. Nuh-unh!" He got to his feet and left the room, neglecting the fact that he'd already started the ball rolling on a 'Get-Snape-Arrested' reset. Thankfully, it was after noon, so the horrid man had already been removed from the castle.

Not wanting to deal with all the drama though, Harry did at least make sure to get under his Invisibility Cloak.

He made his way to the Great Hall and sat at his place at Gryffindor table, still under his Invisibility Cloak. It was an interesting experience he discovered. Thankfully not too complex, it was the same as eating in any ordinary cloak, he just had to make sure the hood was pulled down so nobody saw his face. After lunch, he didn't bother going to the OWL test, he was supposed to be dead or missing after all, so instead he made his way to the Library. Right on time, which was unusual for a Snape-Arrested Reset, the Vision

came knocking at his outer defenses. He felt Voldemort knocking and trying to force the false vision through, but it didn't even make its way out of the forest. Right as it ended, or rather when the bastard finally stopped trying, Harry remembered that he had written the note in hand, rather than have it delivered by Ministry Owl. Snape had already reported in to his masters by the point word started spreading of what Snape had 'done' hence why the vision still came.

Harry, sitting at one of the tables in the Library still under his Invisibility Cloak, started drumming his fingers on the table, annoying the other occupants to no end, until they looked up and saw nobody there.

Now that his Occlumency was further developed, these mental attacks by the bastard, (that was a good name for him seeing as he was, technically speaking, a bastard), were more annoying than any worthy kind of challenge to overcome like it used to be. Also, breaking into the Ministry had become rather... monotonous. He needed to start taking out the Bastard before he even sent the vision. Sure, he'd discovered the way of using the Protean charm and animating that doll to walk into the Veil, but that was rather painful to be doing day after day, everyday. Especially seeing as the wound never stopped bleeding after he'd gathered the blood. He needed to assassinate him, or attack him, long before the Death Eaters went to the Ministry of Magic, preferably before two o'clock when the Bastard sent that annoying false vision.

The problem then became, how to attack him, and where to attack him at? He knew he could draw him to the Ministry after the ambush failed, but beyond that, he had no clue as to where to find the Bastard. The how to attack him merely became a matter of devious imagination and maybe asking for occasional bits of advice from certain parties, but that still left figuring out where the Bastard was, and how to find him?

He decided to go to one of the two people he went to, these days, for advice on things he had no clue about. Seeing as Hermione would immediately freak out over his sudden appearance after supposedly being killed or kidnapped by Snape, that left him with just one other to go to.

"Excuse me, Madam Pince?" he asked from beneath his Invisibility Cloak. The Librarian didn't bother looking up, she merely hissed a 'shh' at him and continued her work on the card catalog.

"I'm trying to find someone that is not in the castle, or Hogsmeade, or anywhere that I can ask people about where to find this individual. What books would you recommend I begin with in finding ways to locate this individual?" he asked, even as he placed a sugar quill for each word spoken in front of her, all different flavors.

"Shh," she hissed again, took one of the quills and hid the rest away before walking away from her desk. Harry quickly followed, invisible and as silent as he could possibly move.

She took three left turns, four right turns, and went down two flights of stairs, each at opposite ends of impossibly long corridors, and then took him down a long, twisting, maze-like path amidst shelves that had several sharp turns, but seeing as there was only the one path they weren't technically turns. The path was incredibly dusty, in fact Harry could see no footprints or signs that anyone had been down here or touched the books on these shelves for half a century or more. They came to the end of the corridor where a single reading desk and a stool sat with an empty candle holder on the side for reading light. Madam Pince dropped a fresh candle into the holder and muttered, "Divination Section. Start with the book there, put it back when you're done. All the books are in order and I will know if you've put them out of order." She then spun and left, taking the only other source of light, her wand, with her. Harry waited until the light had disappeared all the way back up the path before reaching his hand out to the candle and lighting the wick with his fingertip. He pulled the indicated book from the shelf and sat down on the stool, still under his Cloak (hey, it was cold down there!), and began to read by candle light.

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Harry felt cheated. Not nearly as cheated as he and every student for the past one hundred and fifty years had truly been, and certainly not as cheated as Professor Trelawney had been for her entire life. That he didn't feel as vindictive as he properly should, he took it as a sign that his recent Occlumency training had actually improved his

overall demeanor toward life and everything else. He still felt cheated though!

Divination magic, contrary to popular and accepted belief, was not 'magic that lets you see the future' or even know the future for that matter. Divination magic, quite simply, in the simplest terms Harry could define it by, was magic that gathered and displayed information. Nothing more complex or mystical than that. Divination magic was about knowing things! Not just the future, but anything and everything!

The Divination Section of the Hogwarts Library started at the desk Madam Pince had lead him to, and from his browsing he soon discovered that it covered every single book along the winding twisting path of completely filled and in some instances over-filled bookcases, went all the way to the last staircase they came down. As near as he could tell, this corridor was at least as long as the same Third Floor Corridor he and his friends had fought their way down in their First Year. Not counting how many steps it took with all the twists and turns, but instead counting it as actual distance inside the Castle itself. With all the twists and turns, as far as walking distance it was roughly three times as long as that corridor. The real kicker that drove home just how cheated everyone should be feeling was that every single last one of those books covered, in entirety, every possible avenue of the subject of the Magical Art of Divination.

In fact, just from the one primer he read, that first book on the first shelf, Harry discovered that "reading the future" was no more a part of Divination than Elemental magic was a part of Charms!

In contrast, diagnostic spells, medical, menial or otherwise, THOSE were divination spells! The Point Me Charm was a divination spell. And more importantly, the Art of Scrying was divination. And scrying was exactly what he needed to track down and kill the Bastard.

The primer on divination was actually the first of twelve books that covered the whole of all the Arts of Divination Magic. Harry felt it was a good idea to go through all those first before he sought out the books on scrying specifically. Thankfully he managed to finish the first book before what remained of his afternoon had even ended. He moved on to the next book, which actually covered diagnostic and general information-providing spells. It wasn't just a list of spells and how to use them, but a full on educational manual that would

best be covered in the First Year at Hogwarts for all students. Unfortunately, this twelve volume set appeared to be the only copies in existence, and for all Harry knew, they were the originals.

When Harry's stomach started growling at him, he'd reached roughly halfway through the third book, which was a level up from the second book and was more on the theories behind divination spells, still along the lines of a book made for Hogwarts Education, but for Second Years. His hunger was distracting him from continuing to read however, so he remembered what page he was on and put the books back on the shelves, in the right order, and then invisibly made his way out of the Library and back to the Great Hall. Dinner was already well under way, but the only subject on anyone's lips, save for the food they were eating, was Snape killing/kidnapping him.

Staying under his Invisibility Cloak, he sat on Hermione's free side at his usual spot and began to eat, still making sure that the hood of the cloak covered his face at all times. Remote-cast Accio and Leviosa charms took care of the rest. Once his hunger was satisfied, he made to get up to leave and head back to the Library to finish the rest of those books on divination, but in his haste he wasn't paying attention when the foot of his Cloak caught on the bench and for just a few moments, Harry's head was uncovered and lay bare to the whole room. Fortunately, he noticed soon enough that he uncaught the cloak and pulled the hood back over him so it was only for those few moments. Unfortunately, people were watching and saw him.

The whole school being in an uproar over the floating disembodied head, while amusing, made it very difficult to get anywhere while under his Invisibility Cloak undiscovered, let alone the Library. Half the student body insisted that Snape had killed Harry Potter and the boy was now a ghost. The other half, the surprising half, likewise insisted that Harry was still alive and either hiding out in plain sight, or was trying to send a message. The Hufflepuffs and Ravenclaws were the ones insisting he was dead, and it was the Slytherins and Gryffindors insisting he was alive, but it was his friends that were insisting he was hiding while the Slytherins mostly said he was trying to send some message about where he was being held captive.

When he finally made his way out of the Great Hall, he had to stay out of the corridors and was stuck taking secret passageways to get back to the Library, instead of the fast way via the Grand Staircase. Once back in the Library, he had to duck out of the way of a whole

lot of Ravenclaws, and it took him the longest time to get to the staircases, and even longer to get down them as there were students going up and down them at completely random intervals. And here he was thinking this section of the Library was unused!

When he made it down the last flight of stairs, he saw that the dust along the floor only had a few footsteps going back and forth through it. Most likely only Madam Pince's and his own. Or so he hoped. At the end of the winding corridor, a fresh candle had replaced the old one, but other than that there was no indication of anyone other than him having been here in a century. He picked up the book he'd been in the middle of, re-lit the candle, and continued where he left off. He never actually went to bed that night and did manage to get through most of the primer books there. The last four books were actually specialized books, covering in extreme detail the following Arts of Divination; Forecasting, Divining, Scrying, and Psychomancy.

Forecasting is where people get confused in thinking that divination was all about telling the future. Forecasting was actually all about using the information present in the past as well as the world around them. In other words, they were spells that gave you information about past events, and current status of nature and other random bits of things so that one can make an Educated Guess as to what will happen next in various respects. It's exactly the same thing as what muggles use to predict the weather and who knows how many other natural events, it's just they use specialized tools and advanced technology to do what this branch of divination used magic to study and discover.

Divining was something else muggles already knew a lot about, although they had sensationalized it so it was as mystical to them as magic. The actual magic of it was far more simple in fact. The Point Me Spell belonged to this school of divination. As did a number of other basic charms that Professor Flitwick taught as ways of finding useful things. There was even a water-finding spell that he'd taught Harry in his Third Year. Divining was all about locating nearby objects or basic materials or needs or sometimes even people, but again they had to be nearby as the spell would only lead you to it so you wound up walking towards it rather than just knowing where it was.

That's where Scrying came into play. Scrying was about knowing where to find what it was you were looking for, without leading you on a chase by playing hound dog. Scrying involved using maps, or representations, or sometimes pools of water, crystal balls, tea leaf remains at the bottom of a cup, pretty much everything that Professor Trelawney had been teaching them, although she was trying to teach them Forecasting rather than Scrying. The difference made all the difference in the world.

The last, Psychomancy, was the other aspect of Divination that had been rather sensationalized by the world at large, and the other thing that Professor Trelawney had, mistakenly, been trying to teach her students. Psychomancy were spells and magical skills that dealt with learning more about humans, gathering data and personal information from them through magical means and then ways of studying that to come to a result that made it look like you were either reading their mind, or their future. Palmistry, Tarot, and all manner of divination magic skills involving individuals and determining their past, present, or predicting their near future fell under this art. Harry wasn't particularly interested in it, but he read the book anyway.

Thanks to reading the books though, he now had a better understanding of what Divination was, and more importantly, he knew which books among the hundreds around him to look for and to read so that he could start tracking down Voldemort and figuring out ways to kill him at the start of the day, rather than the end of it. Before he could start studying up though, he just needed to get some sleep. So he curled up under the desk, using the next book on the shelf as a pillow, and his Invisibility Cloak as a blanket, and slept until time looped once more.

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Scrying had a whole host of methods that could be used, and just as many interpretations behind using each of them. As far as he could tell in the literature he read there in the Divination Section of the Hogwarts Library, for most people scrying was about seeing something that provides insight into either the future, one's personal life, or a way to find what one was seeking from life in general. Harry quickly moved past all the romance based applications of the art.

Ever since he rediscovered his Veela-ness with the Patil Sisters, romance issues were the least of his worries.

The most practical, and therefore the most useful methods he had discovered involved using a variety of crystals in differing forms, or elemental scrying. Most people used water, but Harry, with his multi-element affinity, found that using fire, clouds, and sand worked just as well.

With a crystal ball, or shining a light through several crystals all at once, what you got were images of what you were scrying, seeing them and their surroundings, identifying them by sight. But if you included a map, or a globe, or some other means of identifying location, the light of the crystals focused on one spot, and if you dangled a crystal from a cord or chain, it would be drawn to a certain point on the same map or globe.

With the elements however, well there was really only one way to use it for each element. Water was like a crystal ball, in that you could see what you were looking for, as well as the surroundings. With fire, you saw the face of the person you were looking for, and then suddenly just knew where they were. With air, or clouds, the clouds shaped themselves to the person or object you were focused on, and for as long as you were scrying, you could see and hear what was happening around them in real time. With earth, or sand, you poured the ground up rocks in random patterns, and the resulting overall pattern gave you the vital clue needed to find what you were looking for.

Again, there were hundreds of thousands of ways to use each of these methods, depending on the wizard or witch, or even the circumstances. There were, however, five methods that Harry found easy to use and were more reliable than most. Using a map and a quartz crystal on a string, he could find exactly where Voldemort was at any time, down to the housing address. Using a crystal ball, he could confirm that and get everything he'd need for making a Portkey to the location. Using a bowl of water, Harry could see which room of the building he was in. And then by scrying the wind and air, he could see and hear what was going on around him without the painful necessity of their connection. The fifth, scrying by fire, Harry didn't use very often, but he did note that it was an extremely effective way of making sure his Apparation coordinates were spot on.

Now that he finally had his method of tracking down where the Bastard was in the mornings, he could start to look into the fun parts of the plan, coming up with ways of killing him. Hopefully more permanently than the ways he'd found of doing it so far.

He spent a few days relaxing and getting his head in the game, learning from Ron about how to be a Keeper, working on some alternative means of completing his Occlumency, before finally getting to some nitty gritty planning on ways to assassinate a Dark Lord. His first idea, do it in person, was admittedly not his best idea. It was also why he held off on scrying through fire afterward. The times he'd tried it hadn't been pleasant, with what had happened as he Apparated in right behind the Bastard and was going to blast him with an explosion curse before Hyper-Apparating back out. Of course he'd expected there to be Anti-Apparation wards around Malfoy Manor, so before anything else, he Ward Bounced the place and that took down all the wards rather effectively and got inside before they'd even finished failing. He still died before he even knew what had happened, let alone before he could blast the Bastard into his component atoms.

He tried Portkeys and flashing in via his Athene Owl Animagus form too. He was dead before he'd even fully appeared no matter what. So he tried appearing a bit further out and then making his way in. He kept running into guards of one form or another. He did at least discover what kept killing him so quickly. Seems that Malfoy had more House Elves than just Dobby, and those little buggers took exception to wizards coming in to kill guests of their master. Harry got Dobby to get the other elves there to back down or at least be distracted for a few precious minutes and tried again. He managed to last ten seconds before the Death Eaters that were always, always, around the Bastard got him. He never managed to land an instant-kill shot on the Bastard either.

So, first idea was tossed because of those few failures. (Like he was going to do it more times than that!)

His next idea was to try sending some kind of dangerous, lethal animal, but he had trouble thinking of one that the Bastard couldn't immediately tame anyway. So that was shelved until he found one that fit the bill.

He tried a few more ideas, and unfortunately not much came of them.

And then, after spending a whole day practicing his Keeper skills against Ron and the rest of the Gryffindors, he happened to glance one of the younger muggleborns with a magazine. On the cover was an unmoving picture of a nuclear explosion with some movie actors standing dramatically in front of it. Harry grinned at the ideas that gave him, and then he stopped entirely as the idea fully filtered through his brain.

Explosives. And not just any explosives. BIG explosives! He only had to get his hands on some of them and then he could turn the bombs themselves into Portkeys. Disguise it as 'mail' to the 'important guest' and the elves wouldn't stop it. Hm... maybe get Dobby to evacuate the elves, just in case?

A bit of scrying, using alternative and some divining means, he located the nearest source of military-grade explosives he could find and then spent a few resets learning how to make bombs, mostly from the instruction manuals that came with the explosives themselves. He tried all sorts of things and tried to figure out what worked best. Grenades, he discovered, were not really a good idea. At least not when he was still in range of the blast. Mortars, mines, and rockets had their own complications, even after he learned how to use them. Straight up bombs of dynamite or C-4 with blinking lights just plain didn't work because the moment that Voldemort, or any of the Death Eaters around him saw it, they would vanish it on the spot and it would do absolutely no good whatsoever.

That's when Harry came across a rifle with a scope on it in one of the stockpiles he was raiding. A little bit of reading and some spy-scrying showed Harry that it was a sniper rifle and what it was used for. Not having any clue about where to go, who to ask, or even how to load the thing let alone shoot it, he hesitated in taking it, though it was extremely tempting. On one particular bomb raid, Harry took it just to see if he could figure out how to at least shoot it. Using scrying spells of the real snipers as a visual manual, he managed to get it loaded and learned how to position it and himself while holding it. He set up some targets, non-living, out in the forest and learned the hard way how difficult it was to use a gun, let alone a sniper rifle!

He couldn't imagine being able to control it well enough to take out anyone with it, let alone Voldemort!

Seeing that ordinary military ordinance wasn't working for his assassination attempts, Harry decided to change tactics. If he couldn't take the Bastard out like he was an individual, he'd see if he could take him out like he was a city.

It took longer than expected, but eventually Harry managed to find what he was looking for. And all it took to use it was learning how to type in military coordinates for where Voldemort was at.

Harry was surprised that the biggest bombs the British Military had available were so poorly protected. But then again, he was kind of cheating, but still he was surprised the Ministry of Magic didn't throw it's own protections in with keeping the world from being blown up with nuclear weapons. After all, once Harry knew where to go, he just Apparated right in, walked up to the first available computer terminal in a completely empty room, cast an Alohomora Password on it and then typed in the coordinates and then launched it. Harry then went back to Hogwarts and used a scrying pool to watch what was going to happen. The Bastard and all his cronies never even knew what hit them. They always started out at Malfoy Manor, but if Harry attacked with a Portkey bomb, they immediately moved to Riddle Manor in Little Hangleton. Not wanting the innocent muggles of the small town to be punished for Voldemort's sins, he wanted to make sure that the Bastard was still at Malfoy Manor when the bomb landed.

The spell failed the moment the bomb hit, and Harry was pleased to find that it wouldn't work again if he tried to open it based on Voldemort, so instead he opened it based on the location, and immediately wished he hadn't as soon as the image clarified. It was a burning crater, and the crater was several miles wide, much larger than the Malfoy estate had been. Unfortunately, Harry realized, seeing movement in the pool, they had had neighbors as well.

Harry's plan had been to see if this worked and then maybe drop the same bomb three or four more times before trying something else in order to keep from getting bored. But seeing... this...

He canceled the spell and vowed never to do that again!

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Harry focused entirely on his Quidditch training for a while, doing nothing but the basic magical exercises he'd gotten into the habit of doing daily now for training, and just enjoying the freedom and fun that came from playing Quidditch. As such, he was playing Keeper against all the National and International Teams on a regular basis before finally getting back into the mood of killing Voldemort. Unless Harry went into hiding and blamed Snape for his "death/kidnapping" to the point where Voldemort would definitely hear about it, the Bastard kept knocking on his Occlumency defenses day after day after day!

Still, as bad as it got, Harry wasn't ever going to go Nuclear on the Bastard again. But that didn't mean he couldn't still find other ways of blowing him to Kingdom Come.

Recalling that Dumbledore believed Voldemort had created Horcruxes, and what exactly a Horcrux was, Harry adjusted a couple of his scrying spells and started looking for some hostages to use against the Bastard. He found five of them in his first pass over the British Isles. One of them, he was surprised to find, was in Hogwarts itself. He went to the Order's HQ and took the Locket from the pile of dark objects they'd discovered from the previous summer's cleaning, and wasn't surprised to realize it was indeed a Horcrux. He went back to Hogwarts and using the Locket, set up a Divining spell that lead him to the Room of Requirement. Focusing on the Horcrux he wanted, he paced in front of the door and was surprised to see the Room of Hidden Things instead of only the Horcrux. Shrugging, he continued using his Divining spell and soon found the Diadem. The Diadem of Ravenclaw, he recognized.

"Bastard," he growled, realizing that he'd forever corrupted one of the most prized artifacts of the Four Founders.

The next one was in Little Hangleton, and thanks to the fact that he had yet to attack the Bastard, it was safe enough to go there. He started at the Riddle Manor, and then realized he'd missed the mark, as the scrying spell pointed a few miles away. Once he was sure he was at least on the right street, he used the same Divining spell as before and quickly found a rundown old house that looked... bad. Frowning, and knowing better than to risk going into such a place

unprepared, Harry called upon the Lesser Spirit of Air and asked a favor. For retrieving the Horcrux from the house in front of him, he would pay whatever the Sylphs asked of him. They giggled and then asked for something inconsequential, at least as far as Harry was concerned. They wanted a kiss. Harry promised a kiss for the Queen of the Sylphs, and his love for the rest. That was more than they had expected, but less than they asked, and it fit the bill just the same. While her children went and collected the Ring, the Queen appeared before Harry as a young girl. Harry knew better, and didn't bother letting his discomfort at kissing a physically younger girl show as he laid one on her, no tongue of course.

With the Ring in his possession, Harry thanked the Lesser Spirit and all her children and then moved on to the next. The Sylphs all privately agreed that they would retrieve that Ring as many times as he wanted them to if it meant they could bask in that aura he was unleashing.

The last two were both at Malfoy Manor. Considering he was planning on blowing it up, Harry didn't bother with collecting them, though he did water-scry to find out which room they were in so he knew where to drop the extra bombs.

Now that he was back in a homicidal mood, as far as the Bastard was concerned, he rather enjoyed learning how to make bombs. It actually wasn't that hard to do when you got right down to it. It was simpler than making potions that's for sure. After all, the pieces were already all there, thanks to the military, he just had to put it together in the right order. That some pieces were smaller than others was easily handled by fine-controlled Leviosa spells, and as for all that talk about 'bomb-making signatures', that really only applied to enthusiasts or terrorists. Harry went with the most basic designs he could find, not bothering with trick wires or motion sensors or other anti-tampering parts. His targets were wizards, and they were not likely to call the bomb squad.

But they were likely to vanish it, which meant he had to look into some security against that. There was a number of defenses, mostly found in runes and warding, but the most effective Harry found was to simply make it so that whatever it was they were trying to vanish was more complicated than they understood, or could vanish at all in the first place. Just to see if it could happen, Harry tried to vanish one of the Horcruxes. It wouldn't vanish, no matter how hard he tried.

Grinning, he began constructing his bomb, with the Horcruxes themselves being part of it. And just because he didn't plan on using them, didn't mean he did not bother learning those anti-tampering techniques all the same. They actually became rather useful as he made it so that if any part of the bomb got removed, the Horcruxes, which held the actual explosive material, would automatically explode. Wasn't easy, but he felt oddly satisfied when he succeeded in pulling it off. The only thing remaining to do after that was to turn the Horcrux Bomb into a Portkey and send it to Voldemort.

The first time he tried it out, he anxiously awaited, seeing what would happen via his scrying pool. The bomb appeared under the table the Death Eaters were having their meeting at. In his experimentation with Portkeys, he had eventually come across a method of making it near completely silent as it appeared, and after Ward Bouncing through the protections of Malfoy Manor as many times as he had, he'd long since found the 'secret path' they had put in for certain Portkeys, specifically those that Voldemort made. Unfortunately, for the Death Eaters, there was the same exception in this Portkey hole that there was in Hogwarts Anti-Portkey wards, IE if the person keyed into the wards was coming in, no matter who or what made the Portkey, they still got through with no warning to the residents of the house, let alone the House Elves. Thanks to the Horcruxes, which essentially counted as "Lord Voldemort" to the wards, the bomb made it through and was in place with no one being the wiser. He'd also made sure there were no blinking lights or noises that it would make at inconvenient times. With any luck the only way the targets would know it was there would be after it went off, blowing them all to Hell!

Watching through his scrying pool, he listened in as Malfoy read Snape's report from this morning and assured his Lord and Master that all the proper Ministry people had been paid off and the entire Ministry would be abandoned at closing time, and his team in place. Harry listened on as the Bastard made a few changes to Lucius's plans, changes which were more in line with what actually happens. To be honest though, Harry might have preferred Lucius's plan on top of how things actually went. At least, if he'd been in charge and wanted the raid to succeed that is. Voldemort's way just guaranteed that the Order came to the rescue and the Ministry would be alerted to his actually being alive again. Lucius's way, there was a chance that Voldemort could've remained hidden, although all the freed

prisoners would be back in Azkaban with new charges of murdering and kidnapping school children added to their rap sheets.

Right as the Bastard shooed them away so he could "concentrate" on the first phase of the plan, Harry glanced at his watch and held his breath. He let it out as the bomb exploded right on time, at eight o'clock on the dot. The rest of his breath left him in a rumbling growl however, as he continued watching and saw Voldemort standing there with a shield around him. Less than half of the Death Eaters had also managed to react in time and shielded themselves as well. The rest... well, they were so many stains and so much well-done meat across the walls.

Hissing a curse between his teeth, Harry tapped his wand against his second slightly larger bomb. The first was a whole lot of dynamite. This was ten pounds of C-4. The first had been connected to the Ring. This was connected to the Locket. In the pool, the solid block of clay-like material appeared, the Locket wrapped on top of it like a bow. There was a ten second count-down, done with a mechanical timer so as to cut down on glitches. Harry watched as the survivors stared with suspicion at the seemingly harmless Portkey.

Lestrangle, Bellatrix's husband, made to vanish the thing. Right as he was about to, Voldemort stopped him with a silent Crucio and a scream, "NO! It has...!" he was interrupted as the timer finally ran out and the scrying spell cut off, before automatically reforming to outside the mansion. The entire top floor, and more than half the house ignited in flame and the force of the explosion ripped nearly everything else that was standing to pieces. Harry immediately refocused the spell and let out another growl. Bastard was harder to kill than a cockroach!

Harry immediately sent in his last Horcrux Bomb. It was Napalm.

If THIS didn't get him, he was going back to nuclear. Just... smaller nuclear.

Watching patiently through his scrying pool, Harry waited for the fires to die down, until he realized they weren't dying down. Frowning, he shrugged and started a fire and cast the Flame Scrying spell. It failed.

Harry blinked in surprise and dared to grin. He cast it three more times and even tried Wind Scrying for a bit. With wind scrying, he'd found that even with the bastard as a wraith, he could find him, no matter where he was in the world. After he failed to find him entirely, Harry actually laughed out loud, and then he kept laughing for the rest of the day. And it was barely eight fifteen in the morning, still plenty of time for Breakfast even!

Harry spent pretty much the whole rest of the day just laughing at the most random things at the oddest times, and when two o'clock came around he was laughing so hard that he couldn't stop no matter what anyone did. He got thrown out of the OWL test, but that was fine because he'd gotten in the habit of just filling in the answers as soon as he sat down and with his magic boosting his hand-eye coordination he had it completed and turned over inside of five minutes, essay questions included.

After Hermione and Ron got out, he calmed down, slightly. He still burst out in random bits of laughter here and there, doing more to his reputation as being completely insane than his walking around naked ever did. Luna suddenly walked up to him and asked him point blank, "Harry Potter, what did you do?"

She asked it the same way Professor McGonagall used to ask the same question to the Twins, and that was just too funny in and of itself simply because Harry knew that Luna didn't have a strict bone in her entire body. And so he told her, amidst laughter, "Ahahahaha! I, hahaha, I killed You-Know-Who, *snicker*, with a BOMB! BWAHAHAHAHAHAHA!"

Everybody around froze on the spot at those words. Half the school was holding it's breath, the other half were hyperventilating and well on their way to a full out panic attack.

"And the best part?" he laughed even louder, "Gah-hahaha! Guess who's house he was staying at? AAHahahaha! Oh man, Malfoy is going to be super pissed! I hope I'm there to see it!" He started howling with laughter at the very thought of the look on Malfoy's face.

"Harry... what have you done?" Hermione whispered, shocked.

He shrugged, down to constant chuckles now rather than uproarious laughter. "I did what I was raised to do, by Dumbledore. By the

whole damned Wizarding World." He sat so he was more or less laying on the stairs behind him, "I killed Tom Marvolo Riddle, aka Lord Voldemort. With a bomb!" He started laughing again.

"I tried dueling for a while, and I once used a nuclear bomb. Never doing that again by the way. Finally just hit him with bomb after bomb after bomb. It was the Napalm one that finally got him it turned out."

"N-n-nuke... Wait, NAPALM?" Hermione suddenly screamed at him. "Harry, where was You-Know-Who hiding out?"

He shrugged, grinning widely, "Malfoy Manor."

"Harry... how did you know that? Aside from the obvious, I mean," Ron asked.

Harry shrugged and then looked about. Leaping to his feet, he went over and grabbed something out of a Fourth Year's hands and then called out, for the benefit of Hermione and a few others, "Accio water!" He didn't bother using his wand, but nobody made mention of it so he figured he was in the clear for the moment. Water came streaming in from the Great Hall and even down the stairs. The water all pooled in the ceramic bowl that apparently had been a Transfiguration project. Once the water had gathered, Harry kept it level and then put his hand over the water and whispered the scrying spell. Images appeared in the water and once they were there, Harry used his Water magic affinity to draw it out of the ceramic bowl and then expand it until everyone looking on could see it. It was an overhead aerial view of what remained of Malfoy Manor. The fires were still burning.

"Oh my God!" Hermione gasped, her hands going to her mouth.

Harry shrugged again, but he was no longer laughing.

"You've changed... everything Harry," Luna whispered, her eyes wider than normal, her tone filled with as much horror as Hermione's had been.

"Unfortunately... no, I haven't," he answered with a sigh, the depression starting to set in now that the high had started to ebb. "I'm stuck in a time loop. I'll wake up tomorrow morning and

Voldemort will still be here. Snape too, by the way. But the Bastard, uh, the snake-faced bastard that is, was seriously getting on my nerves with his constant mental attacks. So... I got rid of him before he could attack me today. Much better than waiting till the end of the day in the Ministry."

"Harry... have you lost it mate?" Ron said, horrified. "How many people did you kill? Innocent people?"

"Two House Elves, Narcissa Malfoy, a snake named Nagini, and probably got a lot of people at that British Military base where I got all the parts from fired. Beyond that... none. As for Death Eaters and the dark creature calling itself Lord Voldemort? Well, I lost count of how many times I've killed all of them. But if you're talking bodies burning there? Hm... sixty three," he answered matter-of-factly.

"What is everyone doing lollygagging about?" Draco Malfoy stormed down the stairs and then stopped and stared at the image displayed on the water. He went even more pale than normal, and his eyes, if possible, went wider than Luna's ever did. His jaw dropped open and would probably be hanging somewhere down by his ankles if he could actually unhinge it.

Harry smiled and started laughing again. "There it is! Haha! So worth it! Wow, I so wish I could take a picture and frame this!"

"Oh, and Malfoy, congratulations! And, you're welcome," Harry added as a remark, slapping his school enemy on the back, probably harder than strictly necessary. "You're now Lord Malfoy. The last of your line to boot! All your dad's cash and responsibilities and everything that you relied on him to take care of for you? That's all yours now!"

Malfoy fainted on the spot.

"So worth it," Harry smiled and then dispelled the image of former site of Malfoy Manor.

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Harry wanted to see what else he could do, besides just blowing him up, that would keep the Bastard out of his hair. Fun as it was to blow

up Malfoy Manor again and again, and seeing Draco's face after being informed of the fact never got old, he felt like he was starting to fall into a routine about it, and routine was just the first step to boredom. He preferred to stave that off for as long as he possibly could and so started looking for new ways to kill the Bastard.

He still hadn't come across any Magical Beast that was lethal and dangerous enough Voldemort wouldn't immediately tame it. As good as he was getting, and much as he kicked ass against them in the Department of Mysteries, if he wanted to do anything else for the day, going in to kill them himself wasn't an option as all the Death Eaters were naturally nervous in Voldemort's presence anyway, putting them on high alert. It was the only explanation he could come up for why they still managed to kill him even when he got the drop on them!

The second, (or first, depending on who you ask), most common way to assassinate someone was through poison. And oh boy were there ever a lot to choose from! And not just magical poisons either!

Not far from the building where he got the explosives on the military base, was another building and therein Harry discovered a whole new side to warfare. Biological warfare!

To be more specific, old canisters of what was said to be Sulfur Mustard, or bis-chloroethyl sulfide. More commonly known as Mustard Gas. He had no explanation as to why there were canisters of this just lying around unsecured (well, that wasn't entirely true, it was behind a gate with a rusty padlock on it) on a military base. But he wasn't going to look a gift horse in the mouth either.

He took one of the canisters and instead of starting with a roll of dynamite, he setup something that the handbooks called an "aerosol bomb", sometimes more commonly called a bug bomb. He Portkeyed it over and set up the scrying spell to watch. He turned it off less than a minute after the gas was released... and he skipped breakfast. And lunch. And dinner. And pretty much avoided putting anything in his stomach at all for fear of just throwing it back up. Furthermore, he made sure to seal away the memory of the images behind a door in his Inner Mindscape's "Malfoy Manor" Location, marking the spot with lots of warnings to not approach no matter what! Thankfully, that took the edge off enough that he could eat once again without the danger of puking instantly.

The next reset, he went back to Quidditch practice, but not until after raiding the military base and throwing a few other biological agents that he'd found just lying around at the Bastard. He kept that up for a while, until he'd pretty much gone through everything that was just lying around in that biological warfare building. After that, he tried to think up some magical poisons to throw at the Bastard that would be just as effective. Unfortunately, while he wasn't outright immune, he was resistant, as much as Harry himself was to all but the most lethal magical poisons available. And for the rest, he was as paranoid as Mad-Eye Moody, perhaps more so, seeing as Moody was rather heavily scarred, and all the scarring that Voldemort had was, if any, self-inflicted. Which made giving him any kind of poison rather difficult in the first place.

Then an odd thought occurred to Harry one afternoon while practicing one of his new Keeper moves. Voldemort had reacted rather... negatively to being inside Harry's head the very first time around. Sure, he'd taken over for a minute or so, but Harry had felt it when he'd started focusing on his friends and his feelings for them, and his words to Voldemort, that he pitied him. And then the initial ways he'd kept Voldemort out by picturing images and scenarios in his head that actually repulsed the dark creature.

Because that's what the Bastard was, Harry realized, a dark creature! He wasn't human anymore. Not since long before that night fifteen and a half real world years ago. He was a dark creature now, same as any lich or inferi or vampire. Contained within a body that he'd made from a bit of Harry's blood, his father's bone, and Wormtail's hand. A homunculus body, created through alchemical means. Which made him vulnerable.

Harry gave it some thought, and realized that all dark creatures had one weakness. Some more than one, but always a fatal weakness. Vampires, it was sunlight primarily, light itself in other words. Dementors, the only thing that could drive them away was the Patronus charm, a spell based on the purest and happiest feelings the caster can come up with. Inferi, fire destroyed them same as most other dark creatures. Fire was a source of light and magically was considered a part of life itself.

With all that in mind, Harry just needed to figure out the weakness of the dark creature Voldemort had become. Didn't take him long though. Dumbledore had already given him the answer; Love.

Personally, Harry thought that was a total load of bullshit, but while 'love' might not be the key to taking the Bastard out for good, it might still be a potential weakness. He went straight to Snape's special cabinet and found a saved brew of Amortentia. He went to the twins and bought half their stock in the lower quality, but no less intense, love potions they sold at their store, and just to be thorough about it he hit all the other shops on Diagon Alley and Knockturn as well before putting together a new aerosol bomb. This one he privately dubbed the 'Love Bomb'. The end results were just as disturbing as the Mustard Gas incident, though thankfully somewhat more tolerable. Provided he didn't look over at Malfoy, Crabbe and Goyle. He really didn't want to find out if the apple didn't fall far from the tree with those three's families.

He could, however confirm that love potions did have at least some negative effects on Voldemort. And more than just mental as the man watched everyone in the manor fall in love with each other right before his eyes, and there were less than a handful of females present to begin with. Unfortunately, while it worked the same as Holy Water would on a vampire, the most it did was create a rash and give the Bastard a nose bleed.

Although, Harry did wonder why it was the nosebleed didn't start until after Malfoy, Crabbe and Goyle Seniors decided to show their love for one another on the table right in front of their fellow Death Eaters. Malfoy was, of course, in the middle.

After that, Harry went a bit crazy and started sending all manner of stuff just to see how well, or how poorly it worked on offing the Bastard and his Death Munchers. (... He tried his best to hold back the bile in his throat as his subconscious made a nuisance of itself as that insulting term took on a whole new range of unpleasant connotations...)

After the Love Bomb, he got a whole case of cherry flavored Chocolate Frogs, making them a vivid pink color, and adjusted the enchantments on them just so, not by a lot but just enough so that they would swarm Voldemort wherever he was no matter what. And just to be extra cruel, he dosed them with the same combination of

love potions as he'd put in the Love Bomb. Now that was funny, watching the Bastard go running around being chased by bright pink frogs everywhere and screaming at everyone around him to do something about them. Part of the original enchantments of the Chocolate Frogs was that they couldn't be vanished, only eaten.

Even long after that reset was done and gone, remembering the image of Voldemort swarmed by 'Umbridge-Pink' Chocolate Frogs while screaming for Malfoy and Bellatrix to "Get Them Off!" was always guaranteed to bring a smile to his face. It may not be pure enough for a Patronus charm, but for Harry just recalling it for a few moments worked better than a Cheering charm!

Hm, speaking of which, Harry thought he might as well try various spells that were meant to conjure or cause 'light' emotions, such as happiness and laughter among other things. Just to see what would happen. It was an interesting experiment that was for sure. Unfortunately, Harry had no way of casting those spells from long distance, at least not yet. And his enchanting was still amateurish at best. So he put that off for a time when he felt up to fighting the Bastard face-to-face again.

After having a bit more fun, not to mention repeating the Pink Frog Plague as often as possible, Harry was needing to spend more and more time on Quidditch practice, as he felt he was getting really good and he wanted to prove, albeit just to himself, that he was the absolute best. So he started working on more moves and skill sets for all the different positions, and also several ways so he could actually, and successfully play multiple positions by himself against a standard team. He began with the other school teams to try his skills on.

Unfortunately, the Pink Frog Plague and some of the other more elaborate assassinations took time to set up, time that he'd rather spend on his Quidditch Training, and if he didn't kill Voldemort, then the Bastard kept up his mental attacks all day! And that was worse than spending extra time on killing him!

So, he went back to explosives for a bit. But then after he got good enough to beat all the School Teams, going all the way to the military base got to be rather... cumbersome. So Harry spent a reset looking around Hogwarts for other means of offing the Bastard and

his Munchers... (Harry took a brief moment for himself, trying not to throw up after that thought)

One of his ideas for explosives was to just send a Portkey right into Voldemort's Homunculus body and watch the mess from afar. Unfortunately, as he discovered the hard way, even using the Horcruxes to 'let them in', it was not possible to Portkey anything inside a living creature. Vice versa, sure, he could make a Portkey that would send a person or whatever into the side of a mountain or a wall or even the moon! (Sadly, Voldemort was so extremely paranoid that he never let anything touch him without knowing exactly what it was and where it had come from)

As for why one cannot Portkey an object to the inside of a living creature, or even an unliving creature, it took some experimenting on his part, but Harry soon figured out it wasn't just the spell. And yes, the Portus spell did include aspects that prevented one from doing just that. It was more than that however, since the spell components should have allowed for sending Portkeys into zombies, Inferi and vampires, but that was just as impossible. Which made Harry reconsider what his own magic did for him, what everyone's magic did for all of them. After all, Neville's magic made him bounce instead of die when he was thrown out of a window. How much of a leap was it to say that everyone's magic worked the same way and thus prevented the Portkey from appearing inside the body?

Oh well, fun as it was to think about, Portkeying explosives inside someone just wasn't possible.

Still, he paused to consider the concept yet again, just because he couldn't Portkey something dangerous inside of his targets... didn't mean he couldn't switch out ordinary objects for Portkeys to exceedingly dangerous places. Like the surface of the moon, outer space, Antarctica, or perhaps even the bottom of the ocean.

It took a couple of resets just to properly observe how the Bastard and his Munchers behaved every morning. Since there was no way for Harry to interfere or change things prior to sending in the Portkeys, all he had to do was figure out what individual objects they all touched at what times that he could easily switch out with a Portkey to the aforementioned hazardous locations. Unfortunately, Voldemort was still paranoid enough that he really didn't let anything touch him that wasn't vetted thoroughly through his personal

inspection prior to contact. The only exception that Harry could even fathom was the floor he walked on and the chair he—oh, wait, the chair!

It was sheer elegance in its simplicity to hide the Horcruxes inside of various objects and then switch them out via Switching spells for identical objects that Harry targeted through a variety of divination spells, but not before charging them with a Portus charm to places like the tracks along the Northern Line of the London Underground, just in time for the morning rush. He was particularly pleased that he set up a number of the Portkeys to appear in timed sequence so that one would appear right after the other in the train's path right after it had already run over the previous. That was for the ones that didn't have a Horcrux hidden inside them. Those special people that deserved an extra special punishment, well the other hazardous locales seemed fitting. Unfortunately, it would seem the Sun was just a bit out of range for Harry's skills with the Portus spell. Still, he could certainly get the Bastard and his pet snake sent well on their way. Would only take a few years for gravity to bring them close enough to burn up in the corona, but the cold vacuum of space did its job just fine. The others got sent to the heart of a volcano, bottom of the ocean, middle of a nuclear reactor in Russia somewhere, and other places like that.

Something else that he thought of in his plotting was trying to figure out some way of replicating the effects of the damage Hyper-Apparating had on a body that was unprepared for such stress being put on it. It had killed him twice and nearly killed him more than that. Not to mention, experience told him it was, albeit quick, quite a painful way to go. Unfortunately, Portkeys were not able to go to more than one destination at a time. They went to one point and if you wanted them to take you somewhere else, they needed to be 'recharged' to go to that other location.

On the other hand, he considered, slamming into a ward with a Portkey was actually worse than Splinching yourself because it... well, according to Bill Weasley, it could get real messy. It had been discussed between them when he'd been getting Bill to help him figure out the Headmaster Access to Hogwarts' wards, about what was actually supposed to happen when somebody tried to Portkey into Hogwarts, who was not the Headmaster. From the intentionally vague descriptions Bill gave him, Harry guessed that it looked a lot like somebody who Hyper-Apparated a few too many times.

This time, Harry just changed the targets from particularly painful places to die to... well the most securely warded places that he could think of and then some. Gringotts, the Locked Room in the Department of Mysteries, Azkaban, and even Hogwarts since pretty much none of the Death Eaters would even remotely have anything like the Headmaster's Access, and Harry's Portkeys, without the Headmaster going along, could not get past the wards, despite him being a current student. For Voldemort however, well, he had something special planned for him.

During their investigating resets, Bill had revealed to Harry quite a bit of the Curse Breaker's adventures over the years. In particular was this one place in Egypt that no one, for the hundreds of years that they'd been trying, had ever been able to open! Bill showed him pictures and even gave him precise coordinates. They were described as some of the nastiest wards Bill had ever seen and probably ever would see for the rest of his career.

It usually made the Evening Prophet when shredded blobs of Death Eaters showed up at the various locations. As for Voldemort, well, that location in particular happened to be under the seventh Egyptian Pyramid, which was still buried in sand and again was so heavily warded that nothing could get through. Anything that ever tried, well, no trace has ever been found. Nice way to get rid of the Bastard for a day at a time, but still, he felt he could get even more imaginative than that.

There were still some Mandrakes in the Greenhouses, Harry discovered in his searching. Curious as to why it wasn't completely illegal to do so, Harry got all of the nearly-full-matured Mandrakes screaming together as one and recorded the sound into a Howler. He then had Fawkes himself deliver the Howler in the midst of the meeting and (with the earmuffs still on) then watched the results from the lot of them letting the Howler explode rather than be opened. All of the Munchers died instantly. The Bastard, it seemed, was resistant or no longer human enough to be vanquished so easily and maintained enough of his faculties to blast it, stopping the noise. He didn't get away unscathed, but he still lived, albeit weakened. Which was enough for Harry to get a reprieve from the Bastard's mental attacks, which was something at least.

He did that for roughly a week or so, until it got to be more trouble than it was worth. Sure, it took him less than twenty minutes to grab some parchment, go to the Greenhouses, and then record the Howler just in time for Fawkes to show up and take it off, but there were some resets where Harry was in enough of a rush that he forgot the earmuffs, ergo resulting in an abbreviated reset. And so he started looking for something else.

Hagrid had some enchanted bear traps, although he said they were for "trolls, lethifolds an' other nasty, but interestin' things", not bears. They were rather generic, and Hagrid, despite being cleared of all charges three years back, could not enchant them himself and thankfully they were made so they didn't go off on any living creature that walked by. All one had to do was incant what the target of the trap was and then use an enchanted hammer to nail them into place.

Harry used the Hammer to attach the things to the Horcruxes, which he'd managed to negotiate the Lesser Spirits of Air and Earth into getting for him so he didn't have to go around himself every day. After designating anything with a Dark Mark or the same dark magic as the Dark Mark as the target, and then turned the lot of them into Portkeys sending them to Malfoy Manor. It was as good as the Pink Frog Plague... just more gruesome. And just for the hell of it, Harry modified the enchantments just enough so that the teeth of the traps spun round and round, like chainsaws. Made it that much messier, but that much more awesome just the same. Thanks to the Spirits delivering the Horcruxes within a few minutes of each Reset starting, it only took him the time to go down from Gryffindor Tower, swing by Hagrid's Hut on the way to the Quidditch Pitch, and roughly ten minutes to hammer the Horcruxes, modify the enchantments, and then Portkey the lot of them to Malfoy Manor to begin their daily slaughter.

After the first time he didn't bother watching it anymore, as all he cared about was that Voldemort was too occupied to bother with any mental attacks for the entire rest of the day. And for the time being, that was all he cared about.

And then Harry came upon a particularly nasty thing to do to the Bastard. Honestly, he was surprised he hadn't thought of it sooner. Although it was more of a prank idea than an assassination ploy, but if done the right way there was no reason it couldn't be both. The best part, as far as Harry was concerned, all it took him to take care

of it was the time it took him to walk down from Gryffindor Tower to the Quidditch Pitch. Especially since all it took was him calling Dobby and asking for a favor from the excitable House Elf. None of the other House Elves apparently had a problem with it, since Dobby managed to pull it off every morning that Harry asked him to do it.

This was one particular killing of the Bastard that Harry totally refused to watch even one moment of, but the complete and total lack of mental response from said Bastard was enough to tell him that it worked. All Harry did was have Dobby take the entire contents of the Hogwarts sewer system/cistern/or whatever it was they used to send 'waste products' from wherever it was to Malfoy Manor, starting in that same conference room where Voldemort held his meeting. Harry didn't want to know and did not ask how it was that Dobby did it, but the facts remained that for the rest of the day the toilets in the castle worked better than they had in nearly a thousand years, and by dinner time it was revealed to everyone in the world what had happened to Malfoy Manor and all those inside it.

The term "Mountain of Shit" took on a rather humorous literal meaning for Harry after seeing the Wizing photograph of Dobby's handiwork in the Evening Prophet. Taken from a long way off of course.

During those conversations with his little friend, Harry found himself getting curious about how he was doing the things that he was doing. Eventually his curiosity got better than his common sense, which knew better than to ask, and he posed a question to Dobby.

"So Dobby, you know what it is I'm asking you to do, right?"

The little elf's ears flopped from his rapid nodding of his head. "Dobby knows, Harry Potter Sir. Harry Potter Sir would like to hire Dobby to snuff Dobby's evil bad former master, and evil bad former master's master, the Who-No-Poo wizards do not talk about." At the House Elf's name for the Bastard, Harry really struggled not to burst out laughing. It was a close thing.

"And then cover it up by putting 'loads of crap' so no one will be finding it out," Dobby finished his statement rather succinctly.

Harry nodded, they were almost down the last few flights of the Grand Staircase by now. "I'm just curious Dobby, but how is it that

you can do it in the first place? I mean, no offense, but you're just one elf and I couldn't expect one elf to do so much just by yourself. Are you using magic, or are the other House Elves helping you?"

"Oh, Harry Potter Sir is truly a great and powerful wizard!" Dobby was literally bouncing now as they made their way down the last flight of stairs. "Dobby is using special House Elf Vendetta magic against Dobby's evil bad former master, but can only use it if a wizard asks Dobby to use it. And Harry Potter Sir has asked Dobby and Dobby is so pleased that Dobby will put on special House Elf Vendetta clothes for the special occasion!"

Harry blinked and did a brief double-take as they exited out the Main Hall to the path toward the Quidditch Pitch. "Special House Elf Vendetta clothes?" he repeated. As though in reply, Dobby stopped where he stood, and put his hand on the dirty pillow case he wore, as though about to tear it off, only instead it transfigured into a solid black full-body stocking, complete with gloves, boots and a hood and mask for the House Elf's head. It even covered his impossibly large ears and nose without bending them down.

"Dobby go snuff evil bad former master's master now!" the little Ninja Elf squeaked before popping away. Harry could only stare in stunned disbelief at the spot for several long moments before finally shaking his head and cursing the Magical World for all its weirdness. Although 'Dobby the Ninja Elf' had an odd ring to it that gave Harry the shivers each and every time.

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Harry had just defeated every team in Britain and several International Teams from Europe, in every position Quidditch had to offer. If nothing else in the world did, that definitely deserved a day off!

But before that, which he had planned for next reset, he had to work on a few more of his more... esoteric skills. Yes, he'd just spent the whole day playing Quidditch, but after humiliating them in so thorough a fashion, nobody was offering him any deals today, and the Harpies weren't interested for some reason, and he'd kinda been counting on their... entertainment for the evening. The sudden opening that all the Teams leaving at sunset left gave him a unique

opportunity. An opportunity for something that he'd been putting off for one reason or another.

The Teams had just left, and most of his friends had long since gone back up to the Castle, so that just left Harry alone on the Quidditch Pitch, just standing there at center field, ground level. Once he was assured of his privacy for the moment, Harry took a deep breath and let it out slow, and then sat down there on the ground and closed his eyes, entering his mindscape with the same breath. He appeared there just outside his Innermost Hogwarts. In addition to the moat that was between the Lake and the Castle, he'd placed an impossibly high wall. Inside this wall, he'd placed areas. Areas such as Hagrid's Hut, the Owlery, and the Hogwarts Quidditch Pitch. He'd put in a couple other areas as well, but that was neither here nor there. Right now, he was focusing on the Quidditch Pitch area. And his Inner Self that he had just created there.

Filling his consciousness into the Inner-Harry, he opened his eyes and was suddenly IN his mindscape without being the mindscape at the same time. He was aware of it, he was even, peripherally, aware of his physical body, but he was actually in his mindscape now, like the book described.

"Wicked," he grinned and looked down at himself and all around.

Somehow, everything here seemed more...real than even the real world was. But it was just as clearly part of his own mind, part of him, which is what made it so much more real, he realized. He began to walk towards the castle itself, then realized he wasn't really getting anywhere, so he just willed himself there, working from the inside out instead of the outside in as before. It was just like Apparating, except smoother and far more comfortable. He appeared in front of the doors to his Innermost Hogwarts, naked as the day he was born, not even glasses, but he could still see perfectly well. He put his hands on the doors and pushed them open and then entered the Maze of Memories.

Normally, he might spend a few resets just going through it all, browsing along, reliving all his memories the same way one would look at paintings in a museum, but he wanted to get this done! He ran up stairs, he ran down walls, he walked the hallways, he jumped across windows and climbed through doorways. It felt like it took longer than he'd expected, and he'd made the place, so he was at

least confident enough that his defenses could definitely keep out any unwanted trespassers after giving him so much trouble, but finally he made it to the center of his mindscape, the middle of his mind where he kept all his secrets and everything he didn't want anyone to touch. Once there, he sat down in the futuristic looking throne, which conformed to his body like it was made for him. Or perhaps, he mused as his InnerSelf took one final look around the mindscape, like he was made for it.

The moment he sat down in the Chair, his InnerSelf's eyes closed, and his real eyes opened on the Quidditch Pitch. The last rays of the sun finally dipped below the mountains and true twilight began. He couldn't have been sitting there for longer than a few minutes. He wondered why it had taken him so long to actually... no, that's not entirely accurate. He knew why it had taken him so long to finally develop an InnerSelf that could interact with his mindscape. Part of it was fear of vulnerability, part of it was ignorance of what he was trying to do, but the biggest part was his lack of confidence, his belief that first of all it could not be done and primarily that even if it could, he couldn't do it.

After beating every Professional Quidditch Player in Britain and Europe, in every position one could play Quidditch, Harry knew better by now. If anyone could do it, he could do it! And so with that thought and new found belief driving him, he sat down and did it immediately, and in only a couple of minutes, where he'd been expecting it to take hours.

"So much for filling in the opening to my schedule," he said to himself. He started making his way to the locker room, when a sudden impulse overcame him. His InnerSelf, still in his mindscape and still sat in the Chair, quickly tracked the source of the impulse, quarantined it, and then began to analyze what the origin was. In the real world, he blinked and continued on his way to the showers.

That's different, he thought, but it also made a kind of sense. What he'd done by creating the InnerSelf was give form and consciousness to his subconscious mind. Something he could interact with almost. But it was still him. Just his subconscious mind, the Id, the ego and the Superego sort of all rolled into one, running things from the inside of his mind, but on a far more 'real' scale than what was naturally done. Harry could, at any time, join with this InnerSelf and consciously control things. What things could be

controlled, the book had only hinted at, so he figured he would have to figure most of it out on his own. Apparently controlling his impulses was one of...

He stopped walking as the results of the analysis of that impulse came up. He blinked a few dozen times, taking some time to fully process what this meant.

"Uh... what?" he asked himself and shook his head. "I wanted to... what?"

Another dozen impulses suddenly swept through him, and he almost acted on one before they were all fully quarantined by his InnerSelf. He hurried to the showers before anything else happened. What was up with him wanting to use his re-discovered Veela-ness to build himself a harem anyway? Or to fully extend it to the point where every witch in the castle would come running to him and help him shower? How was he even supposed to...?

His InnerSelf pulled up a few of his previously protected memories, in particular was Fleur's side of the conversation, and the shouts he'd heard coming from the closed door where Fleur was actually fighting with her Headmistress to get to him while Dumbledore was erasing his memories. Some of the things she shouted at him even as Dumbledore Obliviated her were particularly memorable.

He reached the showers and turned them all on cold. He gasped as he cleaned himself as quickly as possible, but still stayed under until he was shivering uncontrollably and his lips had turned blue. He hadn't needed a cold shower in a long time, but apparently he'd start needing them again as whatever Pomphrey had done that bound his Veela-ness was starting to wear off.

Oh yeah, he'd gotten way past believing the matron was any paragon of virtue. When he came to her speaking of needing some extra cleansing rituals, she'd seen the truth of it, that it was his Veela-ness breaking out uncontrollably and whatever ritual it had been that she'd used, had instead bound it so that all the girls weren't so irresistibly drawn to him enough to actually fight over him! Good God, how had he ever thought that sort of behavior was just cause he wasn't wearing any clothing?

Looking back on it, he can recall several times when he'd witnessed wizards behaving the exact same way in front of the Veela at the World Cup, and to a far lesser degree around Fleur when she was here at Hogwarts. The biggest question on his mind though, was how he could control it.

It was fairly obvious that his own arousal contributed to it, but it wasn't the only factor, as he could remember quite well that when they'd been chasing him through the halls, he hadn't been the least bit aroused, but still more and more girls joined in the sudden twist to the Harry Hunt. He thought it might have something to do with his use of magic, or his magic power, but he'd been working on his magic control to the point that...

He had his InnerSelf run a sort of self-diagnostic on his magic. The results, when they came up, were exactly what he'd expected. It explained his impulses certainly. His magic control was nearly perfect, so he wasn't leaking any more ambient magic than the average wizard, perhaps a little less even. His arousal was the spark, but his ambient aura was the fuel. So long as even a little bit of his magic came from him, his Veela... aura would affect any and all around him the same as it did your run of the mill Veela, except that it would be females attracted to him rather than males, seeing as all Veela were female and therefore only attracted males, while repelling other females.

Recalling some of the more... intense days during his Naked Time, he knew he wasn't about to go and experiment with his aura all on his own. There might be days where they would literally tear him apart! And as temporary as that would no doubt be, he didn't even want to risk the memory of what that would be like!

So, he sighed as he made his way, fully dressed, back up to the castle, that leaves me with the option of either going to Madam Pomphrey for another binding ritual... or take Fleur up on her original offer.

Well, that was for next reset, he decided, forcing a smile on his face and walking into the Great Hall for Dinner. Tonight, he was still riding the high of what he'd just accomplished.

"Hey guys!" he called as he sat down between Ginny and Hermione. Ron was sat across from them, next to Neville and Angelina, with

the rest of the Quidditch team spread around on either side of the table. "Can any of you believe I actually managed to do it? Finally learned everything there is to learn in Quidditch! Only thing left is to gain a bit of experience here and there. Hey Ron, get loads of autographs this time?"

"Actually no, Harry, we can't believe it," Angelina snapped at him.

"Huh?" he was confused, more by the scowl Ron had given him than by Angelina's snap.

"Who are you and what have you done with Harry Potter?" Hermione asked him. But not in jest, nor in anger. She was asking like she was... like she was afraid of him!

He pulled back slightly. "What's going on here?" he asked, confused and concerned by their reactions to his success.

"Harry can't do what you've done," Ginny growled. "He's good on a broom, no doubt, but he's a Seeker! I don't know who or what you are, but we want our friend back!"

Harry blinked, and replied, "I am Harry, and I can do what I've done. I've had a lot of time to practice, that's all. I took the time to learn each position and I've been training until I finally got good enough to beat all the Professionals. I spoke with you and the girls, Angelina, about learning to be a Chaser. Ron, I went to you personally to show me how to be a Keeper! I went to your brothers to learn how to be a Beater, and oh how I regret it."

"That's impossible!" Hermione exclaimed. "If you've been doing so much training and if we've all been helping you so much, why don't we remember it?"

"I don't know Hermione, why don't you remember it?" he asked her in turn.

"What?" she shouted, her eyes jumping around as her brain raced to accept the implications.

"Oi, Luna!" Harry called, "Need your help with something over here!"

The blonde virtually bounded over to Gryffindor table and once there latched onto Harry's neck and asked, "What can I do for you Harry?"

Hearing the familiar purr in her voice, Harry turned and looked her in the eye, well as much as she would let him that is. "Yeah, not like that Luna. I'm planning on taking the next today off as it is, so maybe later. Right now, I need you to prove to Hermione that I've been training my Quidditch skills for a really long time now. And that you 'remember' seeing me train."

"Oh," Luna nodded her head, still latched around his neck, she turned to face Hermione and said, "Harry has indeed been training very hard. Off and on again. He's incredibly good. Why, not too long ago I watched as he absolutely thrashed every Seeker in the world! He even went to London to get the Twins to help him for most of the today's I can remember. One today, he even came back after killing Voldemort, without dying at the same time, and..."

"Yes, thank you Luna, that was a little bit more than I was hoping to share at the moment," he interrupted, quickly putting his hand over her mouth. She immediately started licking his fingers and he started to worry that his aura might start leaking at any moment, provided it wasn't already that is!

"That doesn't prove anything," Hermione huffed, crossing her arms over her chest.

"Luna," Harry removed his hand and then patted the blonde's head with it, "How long have I been training my Quidditch skills? In number of today's that is."

"Hm..." her wide eyes rolled up in thought and then she answered, "Oh at least several thousand today's, ever since that today where you asked us what we would do if we were stuck in today like you are, and Ron suggested becoming the greatest Quidditch player alive. Can I go next, the next today where you ask us what we would do with today?"

Harry smiled and rather than answer he just gave his friends a 'Well? Your turn' look.

"What are you lot talking about?" Angelina asked.

"I'm stuck in a time loop," Harry answered, straight-forward. "And I really have been training to be the best Quidditch player that I can be. But it's so hard finding new challenges. Now that I've beaten, well just about everyone, I'm thinking of giving it up for a while. Well... not until I've ironed out my skills that is. I've got a couple of new Keeper moves that I want to develop a bit more, and my Potter Pinball still isn't quite complete."

"Potter Pinball?" Ron exclaimed.

"Yeah, that move where I sort of hit the Bludgers so that they hit each player in turn before I even had to hit it again?" Harry reminded them of the Beater move he'd developed and used earlier that afternoon during the scrimmage game against all the Professionals.

Ron recalled seeing it and was soon nodding his head. "Yeah, that was wicked cool. But why do you call it Potter's Pinball?"

Harry shrugged and said, "Potter Pinball, since it's just me, see? And, because I came up with it. Why else? I've checked. Every single last one of my moves are completely original. Nobody else in the League; Regional or International, has ever done anything like any one of my moves. Heck, I barely got to show any of them today, had to stick to the quick ones and the heavy hitters."

"So how did you do that trick where you were actually in front of all three hoops at the same time?" Ron asked, sounding intrigued despite of himself.

"Ah, I call that one the Potter Split. Very different from the Potter Splitter by the way, which is another one of my Beater moves. And it's not easy to do. I'll teach you if you'd like, but it'll take you like thirty years to be able to pull it off. Give or take."

"Thirty years? You're joking!" the redhead shouted.

"No, I'm guessing," he admitted. "First step is, you need to be able to Ramp, and second through seventh steps involve being able to handle Ramped speed. As well as not caring about the after-use quality of your broom, because if you play a game using that move, or any of my moves, the broom is going to be all but useless as soon as a day afterward. And that's provided you have a top-of-the-line high quality broom. So... assuming you put in the typical twelve

hours of work a day, doing nothing but Quidditch with minimum breaks, and getting enough money to buy and keep buying a Firebolt quality broom for each training day and any official games you might play in... Yeah, about thirty years, give or take an extra five to account for any unknown factors."

Ron blinked owlishly at his best friend and then did a sudden reverse from his earlier behavior.

"How long did it take you to learn how to do it?" he asked, eager to hear the answer.

Harry shrugged and answered, "I didn't learn it at all. I came up with it on my own. So considerably longer than it would take you to learn."

"Harry—if that is who you are—please answer Ron's question," Hermione pressed, "How long did it take you to learn how to do what you did, and claim to be able to do, on a broom?"

"Like Luna said, several thousand todays, IE resets, so... I don't know, some five hundred years. I lost track after the Twins Beater training. I swear, those two are more sadistic than Snape and Umbridge put together sometimes! Besides, it's not worth it to keep counting, just makes me depressed. Oh, strawberries! And cake! Yay!" Harry quickly grabbed the favored items of food before anybody else could.

"But... that's impossible!" the bushy-haired witch insisted.

"Time loop, magical time loop at that," Harry reminded her. "Considering you used a Time Turner in your Third Year, giving you extra hours every day, don't you think it's possible that I might accidentally come across something that would stick me in a time loop where I keep reliving the same day? You don't usually have a problem with this when I mention it first thing in the morning."

"But... You... Harry can't do the things that you did today! Nobody can do some of the things you did today!" she kept insisting.

"And whose fault is that, you think?" he argued, letting some of his frustration show. "Why is it that we all hear these amazing stories about Merlin and other magical heroes that did all of these amazing

things, and nobody else can do them? Huh? Look far enough back in history and you see that for a time, these... miracles that everybody lauds as impossible were as common place as Apparating or flying on brooms are today! And all I did was fly recklessly on a broom. You haven't seen me doing what else I've been training in!" He angrily tore into the meat he'd put on his plate as an after thought to the other delicacies he'd procured.

"Like what?" Ginny asked, sounding more curious than afraid in the face of his irrational anger.

"Wandless magic," he mumbled around the bite he'd take. "Elemental magic. Apparating inside Hogwarts. Not easy to do by the way, but not impossible either. Still working on making portals. Oh, and multiple Animagus forms. Got close to six or seven hundred by now. I decided to keep adding after I got my first couple hundred, roughly one every few resets. Still only have less than thirty magical creature forms though. Oh, and that's the other thing, I can turn into a dragon, along with a variety of other magical creatures. And a dinosaur. A couple of dinosaurs actually, and surprisingly those are not magical."

"You can do all of that?" asked Neville. They were all surprised, as everything Harry had just described was up there with the common stories you heard about Merlin's adventures in the Wizarding World.

"Well..." Harry hesitated, drawing out his answer by taking a long slow drink from his goblet. Ugh, Pumpkin juice again. He really needed to find some way to get the elves to liven things up in the drinks department.

"My wandless magic isn't that impressive, I can use it without my wand, but it's not actually casting the magic. Best I can do is create the effect through touch. Elemental magic is getting better. Don't even need my wand for most of that, but it helps, especially if you're casting actual spells rather than just magically manipulating the elements themselves. As for Apparating inside Hogwarts..." He Disapparated, was gone for a couple of seconds and then Apparated back in on Hermione's other side. He then Disapparated again and reappeared back where he was originally. He just smiled at the shocked looks he received.

"I love showing off for you guys," he laughed, enjoying the attention for once, if only because he felt he actually deserved it this time around.

"And your Animagus forms?" Luna whispered into his ear.

"Not at dinner," he grinned.

"How?" gasped Hermione, "How is all this possible? Harry?"

"Gryffindor could do it apparently," he answered, "And because of that, Slytherin and Ravenclaw worked together to figure out a way to keep him from destroying the wards every time he did. So, for someone like me, I sort of just... bounce around the wards here and there and if I time it right, I can reappear just about anywhere I want. Took me a really long time to learn the layout of the castle though, at least when bouncing around the way I do. Seems only the Headmaster can actually Apparate anywhere in the castle that he wants to. I can get to the Great Hall, the Room of Requirement, and almost anywhere in Gryffindor tower without difficulty, but anywhere other than that and I'm shooting blind, sometimes appearing in the complete opposite place of where I was shooting for."

"Where did you learn that Gryffindor could Apparate inside Hogwarts?" Hermione instantly asked him.

"From the Grimoire of Gryffindor," he answered honestly. Hm, really good potatoes. He hadn't had them in a while. Probably why they tasted so good now, his InnerSelf mused. He quietly agreed, completely ignoring how weird it was to independently agree with one's inner voice.

"The what?" everyone that heard him shouted.

"It's in the Room of Requirement, and it doesn't leave the Room of Requirement," he told them. "I needed to learn how to Apparate out of Hogwarts. It showed me a single entry in Gryffindor's diary explaining how he did it. Good luck to any of you that care to try getting it. I haven't been able to get it back since."

"This is, this is, this is," Hermione kept repeating until Luna slapped her on the back, "IMPOSSIBLE! Harry, what you are claiming is, is,

well it isn't done! Nobody, not even Professor Dumbledore can do all that!"

"Dumbledore is the Headmaster, he can Apparate anywhere in Hogwarts that he damn well pleases," Harry informed everyone around him. "He's also practicing the Fire Element, or did nobody ever notice that he never needs his wand to light the candles in here?" He gestured to the 'chandeliers' of candles floating above their heads. "And the man was the Transfiguration teacher here at Hogwarts for how many years? Professor McGonagall has her own Animagus transformation, why wouldn't he?"

"But multiple Animagus forms?" Luna prompted, a familiar twinkle in her eye.

Harry shrugged and finally admitted something he'd only ever admitted to his girlfriends, and only his girlfriends before now. "My father, who by the way discovered his own Animagus form by his Fifth Year of Hogwarts, discovered that the spell that's used as part of the Animagus discovery process actually locks it so the wizard only has a single form. In his Seventh Year, he started experimenting with creating a new spell that would allow for multiple forms, and even the ability to change between those forms with enough practice. Unfortunately, he never got a chance to try it for himself."

"And you discovered this spell—how?" prompted Hermione.

Harry just smiled softly, but otherwise didn't respond. He finished his meal, fielding some questions, answering those he didn't mind or didn't care about either way, and after desert he took them all to the Room of Requirement. Since he did have to retrieve his broom earlier that day, as nobody would play against him if he used any of his specialty brooms that he remade from the school's old brooms, that meant that Umbridge was not going to be a problem. Neither was Snape or Malfoy, mostly because Harry had, over the course of the resets, found ways of ensuring they were otherwise occupied and so he wouldn't have to deal with them while learning from the Professionals. Since no Umbridge meant Snape couldn't be arrested, which also meant that there ran the risk of Snape trying to steal him away for Occlumency lessons when he didn't respond to Voldemort's false vision, he needed some other way of getting him out of the castle. Therefore, after he learned how to bomb the hell

out of Malfoy Manor, he likewise discovered there were other letters that Hedwig could deliver for him that would ensure those two pains in his side were out of his way for the rest of the day.

For Snape, it was a letter from 'Malfoy Senior' asking him to come to his home at once on a matter of family business, delivered a few minutes before the bombs went off. For Malfoy, well, it was a letter to the Ministry informing them of the destruction of Malfoy Manor and little Draco was summoned out of the school before even the first of the Professional Teams arrived. As such, it left Harry and his friends completely free to go anywhere in the school without worry, especially the Room of Requirement. Filch was not even an issue.

Once there, he really did show off. He started by succumbing to Luna's wishes and showing them a fair amount of his Animagus transformations. He kept mostly to normal animals, especially birds, as he seemed to have a proclivity for them, (he had even recently gotten a couple of penguin forms!). While he did show them some of his magical transformations, he only showed them the ones he'd already let slip he had, as well as his first form. When pressed by Luna to show them his strongest form, he quietly insisted that his dragon form was his strongest form, despite it being much smaller than most of the dragons they had seen before.

After the Animagus display, he showed them a couple of his Elemental spells, and the exercises he had to do so he could properly manipulate them. Hermione asked where he'd learned how to do all that, and right in front of her appeared the very same book he'd learned it out of. It was only when he did the really spectacular stuff that he was able to pry her nose out of it after that point. Although when Luna and Ginny both commented that they'd love to see what else he could do with those water whips of his, he wasn't the only one with a blush to match Ginny's and Ron's hair.

He showed them a couple of his magic control and magic power enhancing exercises. He held off from calling forth the Rolling Death, but the old Bludgers were easy enough for him now that he could do it without anyone getting injured. The mazes were complex enough that even Hermione was shaking her head in disbelief, while the rest just stared with their jaws on the ground as he expertly manipulated a couple dozen iron rings, which were so heavy that even all of his friends combined couldn't lift, let alone budge them (with or without

magic), through a three dimensional maze in only a few minutes, all done simultaneously.

Once he'd shown them all that he hadn't been lying about his skill level, or how long he'd been training for, they started treating him differently from before, although he wasn't quite sure if that was better or worse. Before, they had all been thinking that he was either some kind of monster that had taken the place of their friend, or worse a cheater. As bad as that had been, now they were treating him like he saw everyone treat Dumbledore. He really didn't like the thought of that. Dumbledore had done just as much to screw up his life as Voldemort himself had done, perhaps more. The last thing he wanted was to be treated the same as the man that could do no wrong. He wanted his friends to be his friends, not his followers.

"Harry... could you... teach me, what you know?" Hermione asked him out of the blue as he was letting everybody out of the Room.

The question caught him more by surprise than their reactions to his current skill level. "Whuh?"

"I know you have almost unlimited time, but... if you could, I don't know, maybe find some way of bringing me, or just my memories with you when you reset? I... I don't want to get left behind," she whispered, her kissable lips pouting out adorably.

Harry frowned. It hadn't been the first time he'd had the thought, and honestly, he would appreciate the genuine company of Hermione being able to remember the Resets with him. And not just her but all of his friends. And Luna, blessing that she was, her memories were incomplete at best. While she had just demonstrated she could certainly remember more than just the past ten or so resets, he had actually worked with her on one of his 'dating Luna' resets, before he'd started his Quidditch training that is. The days where he walked her through remembering each consecutive day, one after the other as he remembered them, had put her into a coma.

Well, actually the term Madam Pomphrey had called it was a "Non-Responsive State", because it was the exact opposite of what a coma typically was, but the end result was the same. His 'helping her to remember' had basically put her inside whatever visions she was seeing, enough that she couldn't do anything but be in those visions. He left her alone for a couple resets, observing her from afar,

and was pleased to note that she showed no signs of a fugue state and was back to being normal. So while Luna was still 'aware' of the time loop, he wasn't going to have her join him as part of it, not at the price she had to pay for it.

Unfortunately, he had no clue about how to even begin to know where to look to begin figuring out a way to make it happen for anyone else. There were days, singular non-repeated days, where he went to Hermione first thing in the morning and explained everything and asked her help in researching ways to make it possible. It was fruitless of course, as Hermione always had the exact same ideas at the exact same time, so even if Harry told her what she had figured out the day before, they wouldn't make any real progress. And he still had no clue about where to begin.

"Believe me Hermione, if I could even think of a way to do it, I would be all over it," he told her. "But I wouldn't even begin to know where to start looking..."

"What about Dumbledore's Pensieve, drawing out the memories?" she suggested.

"The memories drawn out are copies and are made to go into objects, not other people," he immediately countered. "Same with Legilimency, and the process by which a Dementor sucks out a soul, and the possibility of fusion like what Voldemort did with Quirrel in our First Year. At best you get copies that fit fine in my head, but couldn't be transferred to your head because they would be my memories of your memories, and therefore would be based in my magic. The other ways, you come back to the central problem. Our magic cores would interfere with one another. Isn't it one of those rules of magic you love quoting?"

Hermione sighed, on the verge of tears. Sadly, she nodded her head. "Is there," she tearfully begged of him, "Is there any way that I could, that we could, that you could, maybe?"

An impulsive idea struck Harry right at that moment. His InnerSelf almost quarantined it, but then he took another look at it and allowed it to develop with some extra ideas and more information behind it.

Frowning with thought at the sudden idea, Harry reached out and took Hermione by the back of the neck and kissed her like she'd

never been kissed before, the same way he always kissed her. "I'll see what I can do," he promised, already resolved that on his next off day, he would seek out Fleur and take her up on her offer, and see what else this Veela-ness of his could do for him.

Because if this crazy idea of his was right, then just maybe, he could find a work around to the magic incompatibility issue. But this wasn't going to be easy, or fixed just like that, even if he was right. But it was hope, and that's what he, and Hermione, needed right then. Hope.

-TBC-

Special Thanks to my editors, who definitely had to put a rush on this one, despite I'm sure some very busy schedules. Extra special thanks to one in particular who, while very talented and particularly insightful, didn't quite manage to sync up with what I had planned for this chapter. Moving just a bit too fast, if you know what I mean?

Still, he did such a great job with what I asked him that I couldn't just leave it out, so I decided to share. Hopefully this may even inspire others to further participate with this story. I give you; the First DOM Omake!

OMAKE:

(By: "Aiden_Reon O'Connell" knucklesrocks (AT) hotmail com)

ADDITION

While he was going about sending the bastard and his death eaters all over the place, he stopped to think of where else he might be able to send them. He had been sending them or sending things to them through space but what about time? He mentally kicked himself for overlooking it. How obvious could it have been! He had been roaming around in a never ending loop without really considering what powers might be at work keeping him there, let alone managed to put him there in the first place!

The first place he went was to Dumbledore's office to examine the old clock to see if there was anything blatantly obvious within its magic that might give him some hint as to how he might throw the bastard in a never ending loop of his own! Unfortunately, after

spending a whole reset using all the divination skills he had recently learned, he was no closer to uncovering the secret of that clock than he was to getting out of the time loop. Setting that aside, the next thing he thought of was the pensieve. That magical pool of memories had the ability to propel one into the past, albeit in a controlled manner that was easy to get out of, yet, he wondered if that might be changed. Perhaps some form of interactive landscape might be designed, much like he had been studying about Occlumency. He remembered Dumbledore sifting and advancing through the ministry trials back in his fourth year and wondered if he could do the same.

Of course, since the memories in Dumbledore's pensieve were not his own, Harry decided to empty out its contents. He found that he could vanish them thanks to all his work sorting through his own memories, as the concept of memories was now much less complex to him. He then chose a memory at random: the memory of when he set Nagini on Dudley back before he knew he was a wizard. If he managed to stick the bastard in there on his own, he might just escape, so Harry decided he would throw the snake in there as well. He could throw the snake in after the memory of it thanked him and started slithering away. He dipped his head into the pensieve and was face-to-face with the snake. He tried to stop the memory and move it forward and backward and found that all it took was thinking of which part of it he wanted to see and there it was. Then, since they were his own memories, he tried altering them and getting rid of the zoo, instead setting it inside Malfoy manor. He had seen enough of the place from all his scrying to be able to copy it completely. Then he went about linking the different doors back to each other so that no matter what door the bastard tried to go through, he would end up no closer to leaving the manor than Harry was able to enter. Then, he put more and more layers of it and set them to change at random so that even if the bastard figured out a pattern, the next one would be different and before long, the first one would have changed completely.

After all that, Harry tried to think of how he might manage to get the bastard and his snake inside the fabricated memory. That morning, he made the pensieve look like a cup and sent it to the manor. Unfortunately, no matter where he put it, somehow, the first person to get to it was always one of the bastard's munchers. (he paused to regain his composure) After trying so many times, he decided to put aside that plan until he had a more foolproof way to capture the

snake and its master inside the memory. Even if he didn't get rid of them once and for all, while he was scrying the cup, he would see the stupid git putting it to his lips and disappearing. Then, he would search for him specifically and laugh for hours watching him run around the manor like a lunatic, looking for his master.

Although, if it helps, this would probably fit in quite well some time after Chapter 40 or 45... provided I ever get the story that far! ;D

Chp15